System

Yohji-san

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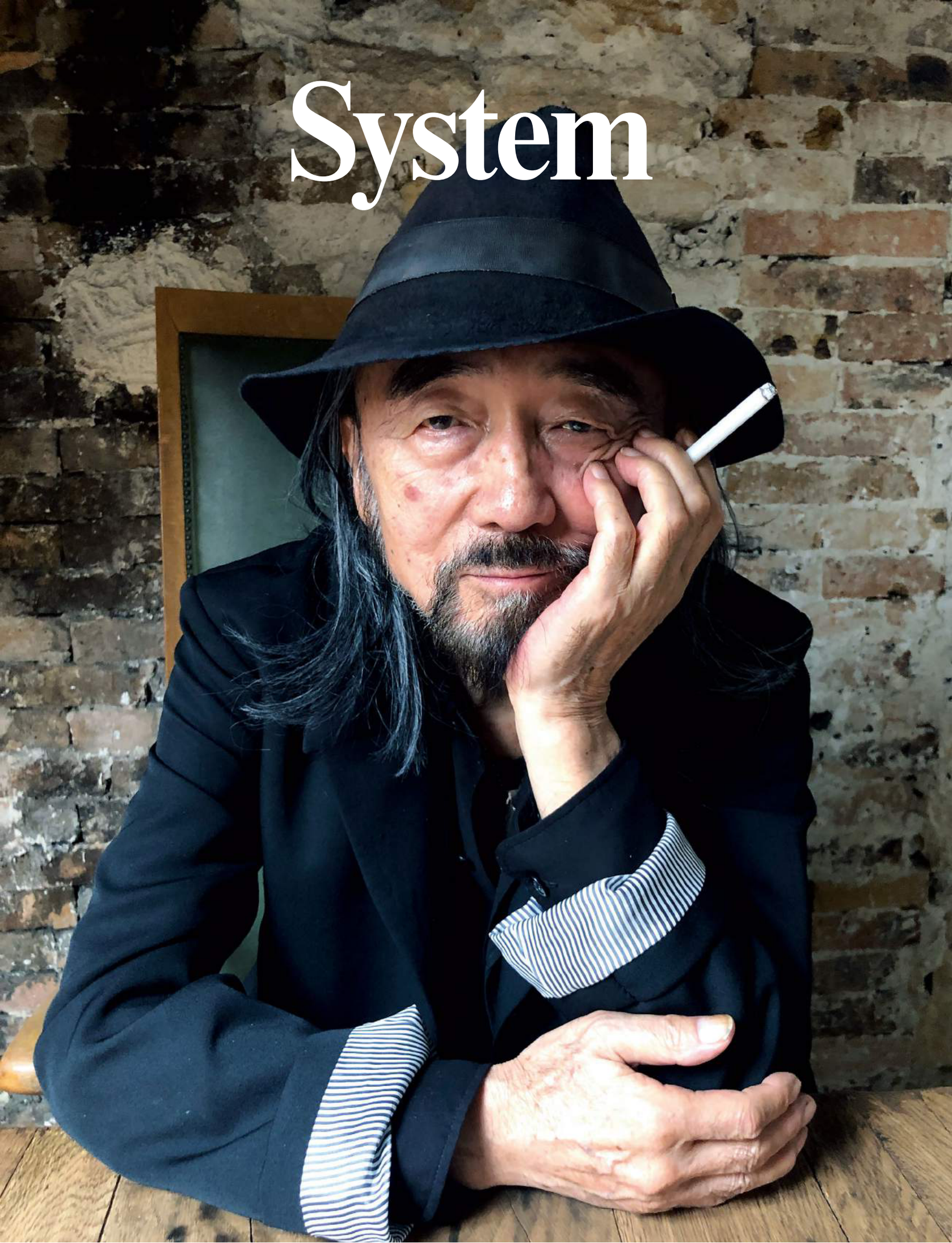

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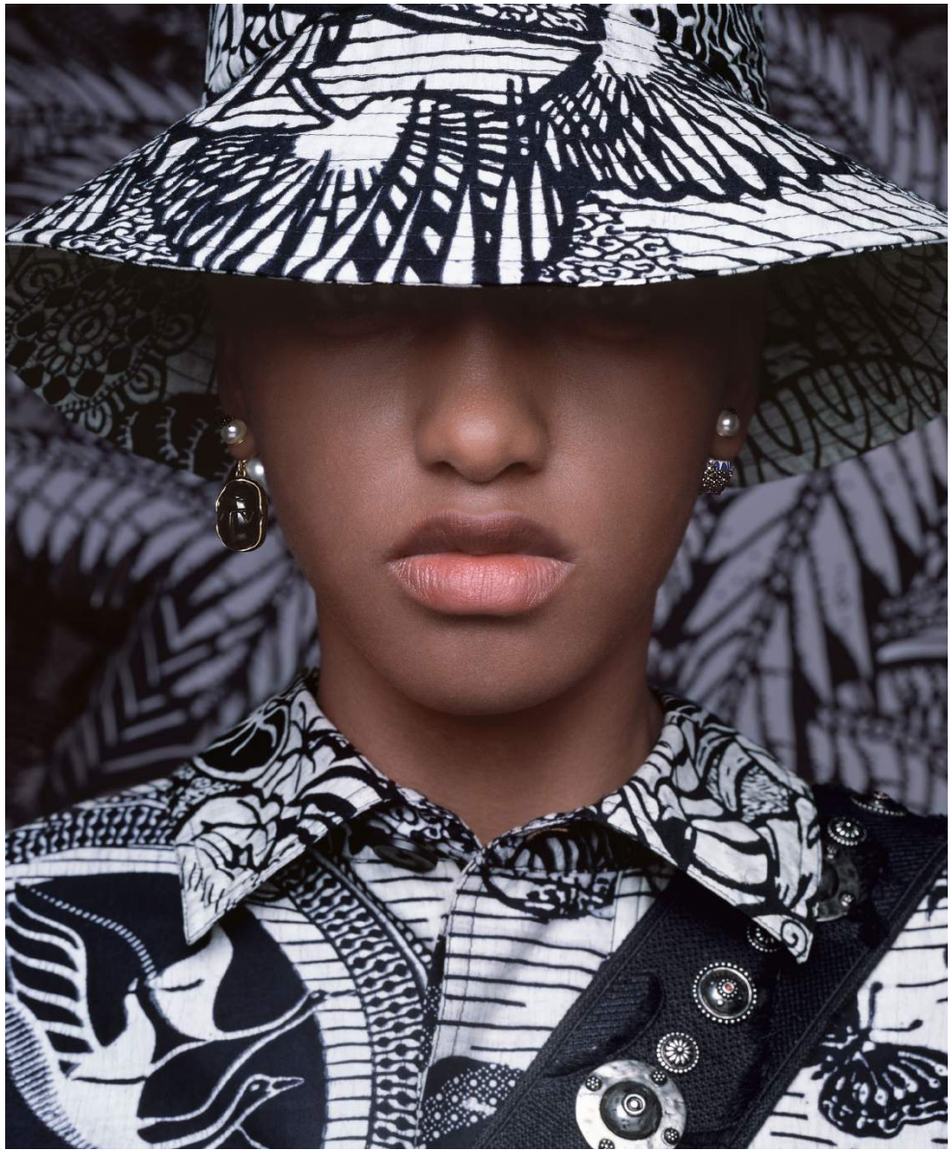

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As this issue of *System* features 'the master' Yohji Yamamoto, we thought it might be apposite to ask our contributors the question, 'Who is your master?'

'I have always served David Bowie, Bryan Ferry, Marc Bolan and Lou Reed,' says fashion critic **Tim Blanks**. 'Things hit you sideways when you're 15 and you never really recover.'

Paris-based photographer **Pierre-Ange Carlotti** chooses Stephen King as his master.

Jean-Philippe Delhomme is a Paris-based fashion illustrator, writer, and painter. David Hockney and Lucian Freud are his masters, like the two sides of the Moon.

Garance Doré is a French photographer, illustrator and author. She has either zero or thousands of masters: 'If thousands, then three of my favourites are my dog, Buddha, and Peter Lindbergh.'

Angelo Flaccavento is an Italian fashion critic. Writer and observer Ennio Flaiano is his master.

Erwan Frotin is a Swiss still-life photographer. He respects a council of masters that includes William Blake, Gustave Doré, Jiddu Krishnamurti, René Lalique, Jacopo Ligozzi, Georgia O'Keeffe, Odilon Redon, Albert Renger-Patzsch, Hildegard von Bingen, and Walt Disney.

Alexander Fury is the fashion features director of *AnOther Magazine* and menswear critic of the *Financial Times*. His master, as you will find out in this issue, is Antony Price.

Tom Guinness is a New York-based stylist, whose master is marketing-guru-journalist and dandy sage Peter York.

London-based stylist **Ibrahim Kamara**'s master and mentor was Barry Kamen: 'An incredible stylist and painter.'

Alasdair McLellan is a British photographer. Once a huge fan of *Dungeons and Dragons*, his master is, obviously, Dungeon Master.

Hans Ulrich Obrist is a Swiss curator and artistic director at Serpentine Galleries, whose master is Édouard Glissant.

Sharna Osborne is a New Zealand-born photographer and filmmaker who believes Jan Švankmajer is the master of the inanimate.

Max Pearmain is a British stylist and co-founder of Symonds Pearmain. Massimo Osti of Stone Island is his master.

Loïc Prigent, a Paris-based writer and documentary filmmaker says Catherine Deneuve is the master: 'Always was, always is and always will be!'

Vanessa Reid is a London-based stylist whose masters include Susan Sontag, David Lynch, Jonathan Richman, Jorge Luis Borges, and her kids.

Chris Rhodes is a British photographer. He doesn't like the sense of domination that the word master entails.

Jerry Stafford is a creative director and stylist. To him, the painter, naturalist and ornithologist Roger Tory Peterson is the master.

Rana Toofanian is a creative director based in Los Angeles. Her fashion masters are Alexander McQueen and Issey Miyake; in music, it's Alice Coltrane and Omar-S.

Willy Vanderperre is a Belgium photographer: 'Would it be pretentious to say I am my own master?'

Noah Wunsch is global head of eCommerce at Sotheby's. His master is Thom Browne for never compromising his brand vision.

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Redemption

For a man widely acknowledged, some might say celebrated, for being taciturn, Yohji Yamamoto is quite the raconteur. As revealed in his conversation with Rick Owens (p.44), the Japanese designer has some colourful and surprising stories up his (jet-black and generously proportioned) sleeve.

While tales of hunting elks, firing Magnum .45s, and thoughts of pursuing a life of crime might seem at odds with Yohji's seemingly shy and retiring nature, they also reaffirm the place he occupies in fashion: a renegade presence as poetic, unwavering and unique as the collections he's been conjuring up for the past 40 years.

Even though he dismisses such hyperbole with a shrug ('I'm just a guy who can make a dress'), let's not forget: this is a designer who fashions dreams out of fabric and a pair of scissors. With his own hands. Not a moodboard or stylist consultant in sight. A man who, when he turned his hand to producing imagery, created seminal catalogues and campaigns in the 1990s that remain the reference for much of the 'content' we see today's creative directors feeding into the world. A visionary whose Y-3 line, launched in collaboration with Adidas back in 2003 and still going strong, set the template for fashion's seemingly never-ending obsession with fashionable (and profitable) sportswear.

Not that any of this matters to Yohji Yamamoto himself. Fifty years after he graduated from fashion school, he still cherishes one thing above all else: his absolute freedom. And freedom – fundamental to creativity – is a word we so rarely associate with fashion designers any more.

Which is what makes Yohji-san the Master.

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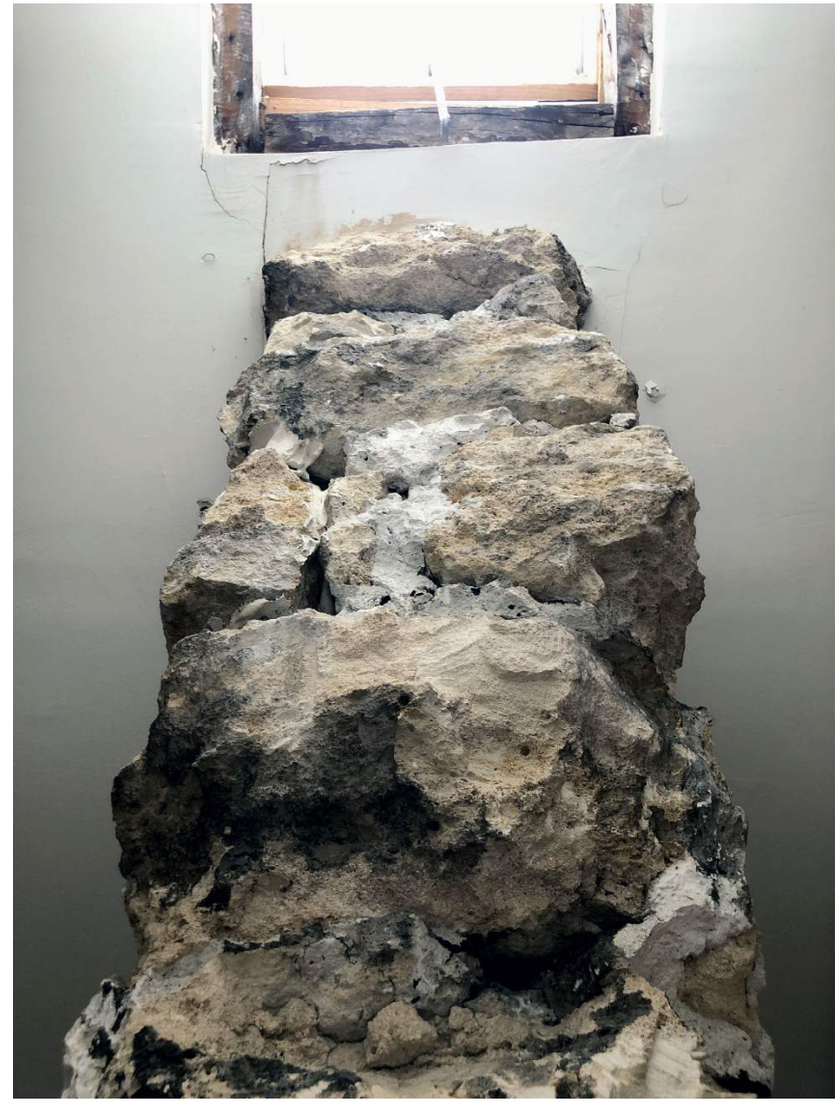
‘Let me tell you a story I’ve never told before.’

What happens when Rick Owens interviews ‘the master’ Yohji Yamamoto...



By Angelo Flaccavento
Photographs by Juergen Teller

NO
FUTURE
Yohji Yamamoto

Very few designers can be talked about, in awe, as revolutionaries who changed the course of contemporary fashion. Yohji Yamamoto is one. Since arriving in Paris from Tokyo in 1981 alongside Rei Kawakubo, and after taking the world by storm with layered, twisted, monochromatic creations that defied Western notions of beauty and radically subverted preconceived ideas on how clothing and body should relate, Yamamoto has become a mainstay and an unavoidable influence. Without him there would have been no 1990s deconstructivism or Belgian conceptualism.

With remarkable consistency, working mostly in black and using fluid silhouettes, Yamamoto has built a massive body of work that is a testament to his sensitive, yet ceaselessly challenging tailoring. As an expert pattern cutter who can 'listen' to fabric, Yamamoto has kept innovating from the inside, oblivious to passing trends and fads. His ideas are built on deep foundations and sit inside the seams of every piece that bears his label. The less Yohji changes, the more he changes, which makes him unique and enduring. Yet, there is more. Yamamoto understood very early the power of the image, and the necessity to be open to new ways of doing business. The catalogues he orchestrated in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s with trusted collaborators, including Marc Ascoli, Peter Saville, M/M (Paris), Nick Knight and Max Vadukul, are unique feats of image engineering and visual storytelling. To this day, they still stand as landmarks to which the rest of the system constantly refers as unbeatable exemplars of emotional modernity. Equally groundbreaking has been his long-standing Y-3 collaboration with Adidas, which launched in 2003, back when merging sport and fashion was an exception, and a highly risky one at that.

A punk at heart, Yohji Yamamoto remains provocative and soulful, macho and poetic – and notoriously a man of few, considered words. For *System*, he agreed to sit down to talk with Rick Owens, another master of the monochromatic, deft pattern-cutter and designer of utmost coherence. Owens' brutalist fantasy of decay might appear to sit miles from Yohji's suave poetry of black, but perhaps not. Let's just let Yohji and Rick do the talking.

Rick Owens: I'm sorry I'm late, we were at the Balenciaga show. I rarely go to shows, but I was just in the mood. And it's not always about the clothes, it's also about the politics and the ceremony and the pageantry. The clothes are only five percent of the whole theatre. I have a pretty quiet life, but every once in a while, I feel like being part of that theatre. I feel like this is our generational aesthetic arena, and I want to be a participant. You sometimes go to shows, right, Yohji?

Yohji Yamamoto: Not recently. The last time I went to a fashion show, I was invited by Marc Jacobs. About 15 years ago. Takashi Murakami was sitting next to me, he had designed some of it…

Rick: Oh yes, the Louis Vuitton collection they did together. Did you like it?

Yohji: I like Marc, he is a great friend, a *young* friend. But I didn't enjoy that show.

Rick: I can generally find something to enjoy in *every* show; I just appreciate being somewhere special, in a nice big space. Anyway, I'm so happy to be doing this with you.

Angelo Flaccavento: Both of you trained as pattern-cutters, working with scissors and fabric, not just on clothing as an idea or a drawing. That seems like an interesting place to start.

Rick: It does. Yohji, where did you learn to make patterns?

Yohji: Patterns? Well, let me start by telling you about my strongest memory from when I graduated from university…

Rick:…which university did you go to?

Yohji: I went to a famous university in Tokyo,[1] I passed the exam to get in there, and once there I had around 10 or 12 very close friends. They were the sons of owners of big companies or of famous shops. I mean, *rich* families. I however was poor, and I had lost my father, too.

Rick: How old were you when you lost your father?

Yohji: I was a baby. So, my mother made up her mind not to marry again. She also made up her mind to work hard and bring me up. She was working as a seamstress, just in the local neighbourhood. So, when I was studying for university exams and preparing to enter the world of business, I felt like it was already unfair, because I was living just with my mother, and we were so poor. Not sad, just poor.

Rick: Did you realize you were poor?

Yohji: I remember one time I was invited to a friend's Christmas party; they had a really gorgeous house with a tennis court in the garden, and I remember thinking to myself, 'Oh, this is not my world.' Anyway, after my graduation, I asked my mother, 'Can I help you, mother, with your dressmaking work?' She didn't speak to me for two weeks after that, because she had spent money on this expensive education for me, for the past three and a half years, and she was so shocked by my decision to want to do sewing. Finally, she gave up and told me, 'Yohji, if you *really* want to help me, you'll have to go to dressmaking school, and at the very least you'll need to learn about cutting. Really learn.' So I really learned.[2]

Rick: Do you think your mother deciding never to remarry had any influence on how you think about women?

Yohji: Oh, yes. In my life, starting with my mother, I have always had the feeling that women are stronger than men.

Rick: I agree with you; they have to be. Is your mother still alive?

Yohji: Yes, she is 103 years old. She is now in an old people's home. She is still healthy, but she's lonely, because she has to live by herself, without family. So, I visit her two or three times a week.

Rick: Is she in Tokyo?

Yohji: Yes, very near to my house.

Rick: My mother is 87 now and we are having conversations about where she is going to go and live.

Yohji: Now is the time to think about that.

Rick: She is very healthy, but we recognize that she is getting slower. She comes to Paris twice a year for the women's shows, but we are having the conversation of where it is she wants to be. It is not easy trying to figure that out. It's not horrible to think about, though; it's interesting.

Yohji: It is interesting. I am afraid that my mother will pass away. I can't imagine how deep and how strong the emotion will be if I lose her. I just want her to live… forever.

Rick: I hear you. That's mortality. Do you think about mortality and do you think about legacy?

Yohji: I don't like it to be called legacy; I'm just a man.

Rick: Yes, you're just a man, but not really. You've done a lot and it's something that will be remembered for a very long time. You've contributed to the culture during your lifetime and you have been recognized for excellence. I mean, you *know* that. Do you never really worry about how you want to be remembered? Do you keep archives?

Yohji: No, I don't like that. [Laughs]

Rick: That's just reckless! Good for you. You get to do it however you want.

Yohji: Just forget everything.

Rick: I don't think that is a bad idea. I have never actually kept archives either.

Yohji: Good.

Rick: But whenever anybody is creating something, they are expressing something and someone like you is very careful to tell your message in a very precise way. You're not sloppy. When you put all of your work together, that is your big expression, and I think somewhere you want to protect that so it is not misunderstood. Don't you ever think about somebody buying the name Yohji Yamamoto 50 years after your death and horrible clothes will be out there with your label in them?

Yohji: That is a terrible idea!

Rick: Yes, a nightmare, I know. Maybe you are right to not think about it at all.

Yohji: [Laughs]

Rick: I was going to bring you this book by John Richardson, do you know him? He writes about cultural figures, and he has a book called *Sacred Monsters, Sacred Masters*.

Yohji: What a title!

Rick: Isn't it after Jean Cocteau: '*monstres sacrées*'? Anyway, it is about creative people who have done significant work. I love the way John Richardson analyses them because he does it in a very academic way, but also in a very salacious way. There is a lot of gossip, sex and alcohol. It's fun. I am always looking at the lives of creative people.

Yohji: Do you have Saint Laurent's book?

Rick: I have it, but I haven't read it yet.

Yohji: You are right, don't read it.

Rick: The reason I want to give you this John Richardson book is because I think you should be in one of those books. You should be *described*.

Yohji: Described?

Rick: Well, I think the word icon is a bit melodramatic, but I think an 'aesthetic contributor to culture' is practical and a nice way of putting it. Do you think of that as flattering? Or is it overly dramatic, or do you prefer to consider yourself as just a guy?

Yohji: Just a guy.

Rick: Well, you're not!

Yohji: I'm just a guy who can make a dress, who can make an outfit. I can cut. That's it. I'm a craftsman.

Rick: Do you live alone in Japan?

Yohji: No, I live with my family.

Rick: Do you have kids?

Yohji: Yes, I have a son who has just recently graduated from the Lycée

'My father's funeral, when I was four years old, was the moment I started to get angry with society; wanting to become an outsider or get into crime.'

'In my mother's shop, kneeling down, in front of a fat woman, pinning the hem of a skirt, I started thinking, 'I want to make men's outfits for women.'

International [near Paris].
Rick: How old is he?
Yohji: Twenty. And from my first marriage, I have two children, one son and one daughter.
Rick: Of course, your daughter is Limi [Feu].[3] She followed in your footsteps, but what do your other children do?
Yohji: Limi is working, and her older brother is floating.
Rick: Did you ever float?
Yohji: Me? I maybe floated for two years. Did you?
Rick: Yeah, I floated; I *really* floated.
Yohji: Really? Before I started the ready-to-wear company, I floated for more than two years. I was travelling the world, by myself.
Rick: That doesn't sound like floating to me, that sounds like learning.
Yohji: Yes, but it was dangerous. I rented a car and went to Tunisia. I didn't even have a map. I was driving the car for a long time in the desert and suddenly the scenery became all white; then I saw a military car that had stopped, and two soldiers with guns stopped me in the desert. That moment I felt, 'Oh, this is the end of my life.' They asked me to show my passport, which they checked, and then finally they said 'go'. The next trip I did was through Indonesia; I went again by myself, by car, without any schedule or map. I like doing that.
Rick: One thing I'm curious to know – how much time do you spend in your studio? Like five days a week? Seven days a week?
Yohji: Almost every day, all year.
Rick: But you know how to protect your privacy and your personal comfort and your health?
Yohji: I'm a genius at protecting my privacy. I have a big dog. And I am always moving with the dog. I drive, so I'm with the dog 24 hours a day, and that makes people think Yohji is lonely, he's only living with dog. But it is a big lie.
Rick: You are not lonely at all. I felt very comfortable alone for a long time and then things changed and it was a surprise, and I wasn't as comfortable as I used to be. It was a shock to me because until then I had had a very organized life. And all of a sudden, it wasn't.
Yohji: I never really organized my life at all.
Rick: Oh, mine is very organized.
Yohji: Really? How can you live like that? I feel strongly that it is not me who is doing this, and that maybe it is my father who is guiding me to live my life in this way.
Rick: Did you know your father well?
Yohji: He died at the end of the war, in 1944, when I was a baby, just one year old. He was put into the army and disappeared and never came back. But still today, I really feel that he is pushing me, guiding me. It is a very strange sensation.
Rick: How has that affected your relationship with your son who's in college?
Yohji: We have a very good relationship because he has inherited almost no DNA from me! [Laughs] He doesn't like sport; he doesn't like fighting. He is always worrying about himself, about getting sick, like, 'Father, I've got a cold, I have a fever.' I am the total opposite. But I do like him.
Rick: Because your father was absent, does that make you overcompensate?
Yohji: Let me say this. People around my mother pushed her into organizing a funeral for my father; my mother always believed he would come back. She waited for a long time, but finally, she gave up, and so she prepared a big funeral for him, when I was four or five years old. And at that moment I got so angry with other adults – my anger with society started at that moment. I said to myself, 'I am not going to join this society. I want to become an outsider or even get into crime.'
Rick: What crime would you commit? What would you be comfortable doing?
Yohji: Anything.
Rick: Murder?
Yohji: Could be.
Rick: Could you hunt? Have you ever shot anything? Have you ever shot an animal?
Yohji: Yes, just once.
Rick: What was it?
Yohji: It was a big elk. I was with my karate master. We went hunting and I had to use the rifle. During the daytime I didn't want to kill the animal because they are so charming and cute, so I didn't shoot. But when the sun was coming down and it was becoming dark, my karate master said, 'We're not going in until you've hit one.' So, in the evening, I saw these two shining red eyes in the distance. I desperately wanted to go back to the hotel because I was very tired, so I focused in the centre of these two eyes, then I shot.
Rick: That is amazing. So you shot the elk. Did you go look at it?
Yohji: Yes.
Rick: And it was dead?
Yohji: It was lying down with its big antlers. The next day, the cook served me

'My mother is 103 years old. I can't imagine how deep and how strong the emotion will be if I lose her. I just want her to live... forever.'

Creative partner to Juergen Teller: Dovile Drizyte.
Post Production: Catalin Plesa @ Quickfix Retouch.

the elk for dinner, and I had to eat it.
Rick: Was it hard to eat?
Yohji: Yes, because I had killed it. That was so painful.
Rick: Was it really painful?
Yohji: Yes, imagine!
Rick: Oh, I don't think I could do it.
Yohji: It was so terrible.
Rick: The funny thing is in the last two years I have gone shooting a lot. It is just something I have thought about doing, so I have been going to shooting ranges.
Yohji: My karate master has taken me to shooting practice. I was shooting with a Magnum .45 – it was so heavy, and the shock of pulling the trigger is so strong that you fly back. After three, four or five shots, I discovered how to shoot. Do you have any reason for doing the shooting?
Rick: I'm wondering if subliminally I do. [Laughs] I thought I would go all the way with the masculinity fantasy. And it is really a very physical thing and it is fun, and when you hit the target right you can feel it in your body. I don't know how that works, but you almost feel like the bullet pressing against your own body… it's a funny thing. Anyway, one thing I wanted to ask you about was, what do you think of young designers?
Yohji: They're OK; they are not my enemy.
Rick: I sometimes look at the new generation of designers and think that it's their job to provoke me, to insult me, and to react to me. But I don't see enough passion or strength out there.
Yohji: You are right.
Rick: But I do see a lot of calculation. Like, 'How do I optimize Instagram?' 'How do I optimize my resources?' And I think that is the new aesthetic, the thing that is supposed to offend us. The fact that they have rejected craft and poetry, and they have made it all about cynicism and calculation. I am not saying that is a bad thing at all, because it is exciting to see someone do something as a reaction. But I don't know how long that is going to last. It's going to be funny to see how it evolves. Do you get excited by young fashion sometimes?
Yohji: Never. It is so boring.
Angelo: Were you both seeking to shock when you started out in fashion? Because Yohji-san, when you arrived in Paris, you shocked people with all the black you used, and all the deconstruction.
Yohji: I didn't mean to shock. I just came to Paris to open a small shop.
Rick: Come on, Yohji! I don't think I believe that. I think you knew *exactly* what you were doing! You knew that what you were doing looked very different to all of the other stuff. [Laughs]
Yohji: Let me tell the truth. I was living with Rei Kawakubo, for eight years or so, and we started a ready-to-wear company, totally different company from ours now, and we lived together, and after five or six years, we had almost enough shops in Japan, so I said to Rei, 'Rei, why don't we go to Paris, to open a new shop?' She told me, 'No, no, no, my company is too busy. I do not have time to open a new shop in Paris; it is impossible.' So, I said, 'OK, Rei, I will go first without you. Sorry.' So, I came here and found, in a very narrow street, called Rue de Cygne,[4] a very, very small shop. And then at the time of the opening, one of the buyers or maybe a journalist came up to me and said, 'Hey Yohji, Rei is making a show in a hotel here in Paris.' Without telling me.
Rick: I didn't know this…
Yohji: This has long been a secret I've not told before. I said, '*What*?' As you know, buyers are very eager to find new things, because they own shops and hire people, so they have to sell. A lot of buyers came to the shop opening; then Rei did her show in that hotel. In the newspaper it said, 'The Yellow Army Arrives.' But it was only two of us. I mean, you call this is an army? I was surprised. It started from that point, that moment, in that way. Seventy percent of journalists didn't like us, what we were doing. I liked very much *WWD* from New York. They did a big article: put a Yohji Yamamoto look and one of Rei's looks, and put a big cross on the page, and wrote in Roman letters, 'sayonara'. I liked it!
Rick: You got to admit *Women's Wear Daily* was fun then; they were bitchy and sassy.
Yohji: Yes, very fun.
Rick: But, wait. You didn't even know Rei was in Paris? You just heard, all of a sudden, that she was doing a show here?
Yohji: Yes, I was so surprised.
Rick: Were you mad?
Yohji: A little bit.
Rick: Were you still together then?
Yohji: It was the first moment that I started to think we would separate. I didn't cry too much because I understood. I could understand how she felt. But in my company, my employees and investors got angry with me. Maybe they felt that I had betrayed them.
Rick: Looking back, is there any other result that you could have foreseen? Like in a relationship, you might think, if I had listened or behaved in another way, would things be different? Do you look back and think, I wish I had handled things differently?
Yohji: I don't like to look back. I am always thinking about the next thing. I was just afraid of myself becoming blind to new things, new emotions. I have strong memories of the show when I did only wedding dresses.[5] It was very successful with the press.
Rick: A *lot* of people have strong memories of that show.
Yohji: And I was invited to New York as the designer of the year. But on the business side, it was so bad – I mean, who would buy that wedding dress?
Rick: I'm sure you sold them in black, didn't you? Didn't you have versions in black, didn't you have other things in the collection? I mean, do you ever think: 'This is what I want to make, and this is what people will want to buy from me, and so I need to balance that'?
Yohji: Yes, that is the reason I made a ready-to-wear company. I kept working and helping in my mother's shop, and so many, funny-proportioned people visited, and I took measurements and I did fittings, and gradually I started thinking to myself, 'Why do I have to do this?'
Rick: Do what?
Yohji: You know, kneeling down, in front of a fat woman, pinning the hem of a skirt… I started feeling I wanted to make men's outfits for women. That was the first time that I decided to really start a company. Men's outfits for women. At that moment, it was so crazy and new. For the first four or five collections, buyers didn't buy anything. And after six collections, the business was drying up…
Rick: Was this in Paris or Tokyo?
Yohji: In Tokyo. And when the company became just a little bit richer and famous, my mother told me, 'Hey Yohji, we started our life from zero, maybe even from minus, so we can come back to zero, no problem.' It was the nicest thing she could have ever said. I don't need to care about the company's mistakes or when it's going down. This word from my mother, it helped me a lot. It still does, any time I make a mistake. It's still keeping me going now.
Rick: You have nothing to lose. I have that attitude, too. I can do whatever I want. But after a while, you have a sense that you are having a conversation with people; you are saying something and people are responding by buying your clothes. It is a very clinical conversation, very one-sided, but it is still a conversation. People are connecting to you.
Yohji: Well, I always say that misunderstanding is also understanding. It is a continuity of misunderstanding. Until now, I don't think I am doing very well.
Rick: You don't think you are doing very well?
Yohji: People are misunderstanding and buying.
Rick: You want them to understand and stop buying?
Yohji: In my business life, I have no memory of having been understood.
Rick: Do you *want* to be understood?
Yohji: That is a very delicate question.
Rick: I think that *everyone* wants to be understood.
Yohji: Myself, I don't care.
Rick: You wouldn't express yourself so carefully if you didn't care, and you express yourself very carefully.
Yohji: You are right.
Rick: There must be moments when you feel people connected with it and understood it, when you said something, it was received, and it was the perfect fit. There have to be moments like that, otherwise you would lose motivation, wouldn't you?
Yohji: In my mind, I feel that if I start to feel satisfied with my work, then maybe I'll lose my motivation.
Rick: Yes, but you must know sometimes like, 'Oh, that came out good, you must feel that.'
Yohji: Very few people feel that.
Rick: You know what? I think that journalism is one of the best things on the planet, because you get to knock on somebody's door and just ask them all these questions – it's fantastic!
Angelo: Rick when did you first become aware of Yohji's work? Was it an epiphany?
Rick: Let's see… I might have seen an image of that *Women's Wear Daily* 'X' page that Yohji was just talking about. When did you first show in Paris?
Yohji: Around 1980.
Rick: I'm trying to think where I was in 1980… I was in between high school and college. I was always conscious of what was happening in fashion, and that would have had a great impact, so it was around the time that you were in Paris, and I have followed your work ever since. Tell me, when you're in Paris these days, do you have an apartment here?
Yohji: Yes, I do.
Rick: How long have you had it?

'The shock of pulling the trigger of a Magnum .45 is so strong that you fly back. After three, four or five shots, though, I discovered how to shoot.'

'There was a moment when I felt like fashion, and what I was doing, had come too far from the language of the street. Y-3 changed all that.'

Yohji: Let me tell you a very interesting story. My main womenswear pattern-maker is very, very, very experienced – I call her my 'co-hand'. When she touches the fabric or when she cuts the outfit, it becomes unbelievable… wow!
Rick: How long has she been working with you?
Yohji: Almost 40 years. So, about 20 years ago, when she was 43 or 44 years old, she suddenly called me to the fitting room, just the two of us, and she started telling me, 'Yohji-san, I'm thinking of having a baby.' 'Whose baby?' 'Your baby, of course!' And I said, 'Really?' At the time, I was already 52 or 53 years old, so what can I do for that? So, I went to the very famous Keio University Hospital in Tokyo, to check if I still had some power, you know, to make a baby. The answer was very funny. The doctor said, 'Yes, you still have it, but you'll just have to move very slowly.' I made a success of the challenge. She called me, 'You made it!' And so this is my youngest son. Later she decided to move to Paris with him. They abandoned me in Tokyo alone and they came to Paris together. So, that is the reason I have the apartment here.
Rick: Wow. What an incredible story. That really proves how powerful the relationship can be with a pattern-maker. I know that if I gave things to a different pattern-maker, something would gradually start changing. It is a very sensitive relationship.
Yohji: It really is.
Rick: I'm curious, what does your apartment in Paris look like?
Yohji: We actually just moved again this year. It's now on Boulevard Raspail.
Rick: But your son and his mother moved here years ago?
Yohji: Yes. We hired a driver who has a really gorgeous Mercedes. He drove my son to the Lycée International in St-Germain-en-Laye every day, for 10 years. I kept sending money for the driver. For 10 years, no joke! And finally, after 10 years here in Paris, they came back to Tokyo.
Rick: How often would you come to Paris?
Yohji: I would only come here for the shows. Four times a year. And then when the Y-3 collections with Adidas started, it became six times a year.
Rick: Is your Mercedes parked outside? We should go for a ride now.
Yohji: My driver told me that his first client was Ken Takakura, a very famous actor in Japan, who was a real gentleman. And his next client was Michael Jackson. And his third one is me.
Angelo: When you started working with Adidas and you added another layer to your workload, you also made a very interesting step outside of your fashion comfort zone…
Yohji: There was a moment when I felt like fashion, and what I was doing, had come too far from the language of the street. At the same time, I felt the sneaker movement starting, especially in New York. You'd see businessmen in the mornings running to the office wearing sneakers; they'd arrive and change, and get rid of the sneakers. I made a phone call to Nike and said, 'I am very interested in sneakers. Does your company ever want to do a collaboration with a designer?' Then came a very nice answer, 'I'm sorry Mr Yamamoto, but we are only going to support non-fashion designers, thank you very much.' So then I called Adidas who said, 'So Yohji, you want to do something with us?' And I did. This was 16 years ago. I really felt I had come too far from the street and so Y-3 changed that. Sometimes, sneaker design is too ugly, but I want the sense of the street.
Rick: I saw some sneakers at Balenciaga today that were sensationally ugly. They were *so* ugly that they were fascinating – and I almost wanted them!
Angelo: Neither of you seem to get tired of the colour black. It seems to be a whole range of expression for you.
Yohji: I have always been very interested in cutting and making a silhouette on a woman's body. A woman's body is like a desert. It's beautiful. And I was only interested in the movement of the fabric on the body, so I didn't want to use colour. White or black. That's enough. So finally, I totally forgot to think about colour. That's it.
Rick: I think there is a lot of chaos in the world, so I like to see just something black in all of that chaos. Yohji, when you do decide to use colour you use it brilliantly.
Yohji: When I use colour, I choose colour that can fight with black. Strong colours, otherwise, the colour always loses the game. Black is very strong.
Rick: Black is very strong. That's a good ending, because I've got to go piss now.
Angelo: One last question, Yohji-san. You have 'No Future' – a punk slogan – written on the back of your jacket. Do you feel like a punk?
Yohji: Always. And people my age have more future than young people.

'I'll always feel like a punk. The punk slogan 'No Future' is written on my jacket. People my age have more future than young people.'

Juergen Teller on the runway for a Yohji Yamamoto menswear show, circa 1992.

1. Yohji Yamamoto studied law at Keio University in Tokyo. He graduated in 1966

2. Yamamoto learned his trade at Bunka Fashion College in Shinjuku, Tokyo, graduating in 1969.

3. Limi Yamamoto is the designer behind the label Limi Feu, which she founded in 1999. She showed in Tokyo until 2007, when she made her Paris debut.

4. Rue de Cygne is a small street just to the north of Les Halles in central Paris. By 1984, Yohji Yamamoto had moved his store to the more high-profile 47 Rue Étienne Marcel.

5. For Spring/Summer 1999, Yamamoto created a collection of variations on the theme of the Western wedding dress, wittily and skillfully deconstructed and reconstructed. Towards the end of the show, certain models slowly removed one layer of their outfit to reveal another dress underneath, then another and another. The show was a huge hit with critics; on video footage of the show, journalists and buyers can be heard gasping and laughing with surprise as the show progresses.

I think I hate Fashion Week

Why one fashionista consciously uncoupled from the shows. By Garance Doré. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme

Paris Fashion Week starts tomorrow, but I am going to Corsica today. It's taken me a long time to be able to reach this point. I used to be so prepared, excited, curious, on edge about Fashion Week. After all, so much used to be at play.

I was one of the first influencers, back when we were called bloggers. Ten years ago – a time before Instagram – I began writing a blog, sharing my illustrations and photographing my thirst for style. Everything I was doing was new. The non-journalistic tone. The freshness. The authenticity. The photos of real people. The clumsiness of someone who had no idea of the world she was stepping into. Back then I could never have imagined how fashion would snub me – and then absorb me completely.

It was a tough journey. I had a lot to prove and I learned the hard way, but through it all I was endlessly curious about that glittery, happy, and cruel world. That excitement about travelling in uncharted territory lasted for years. And then one day, I had become part of the establishment. My lifestyle was amazing – who in their right mind wouldn't have absolutely loved it? I was overwhelmed by presents. I was in magazines. People who just a few months before had slammed doors in my face started treating me with the sort of deference you give a queen. After years of not really knowing what I was going to do with my life, I would arrive at a fashion show and overhear the team at the door whisper into their walkie-talkies: 'Garance Doré is here.' Seriously.

I was not going to let go of what I had created for myself. Not even when it began to give me panic attacks and left me crying myself to sleep. Not even when it filled me with despair at my body, which was not slim enough to actually wear most of those presents, all in sample size, of course. Sometimes I'd whisper to my friends, 'I think I hate Fashion Week', and they'd reply, 'Of course, you do. We all hate Fashion Week – but people would kill for your spot.'

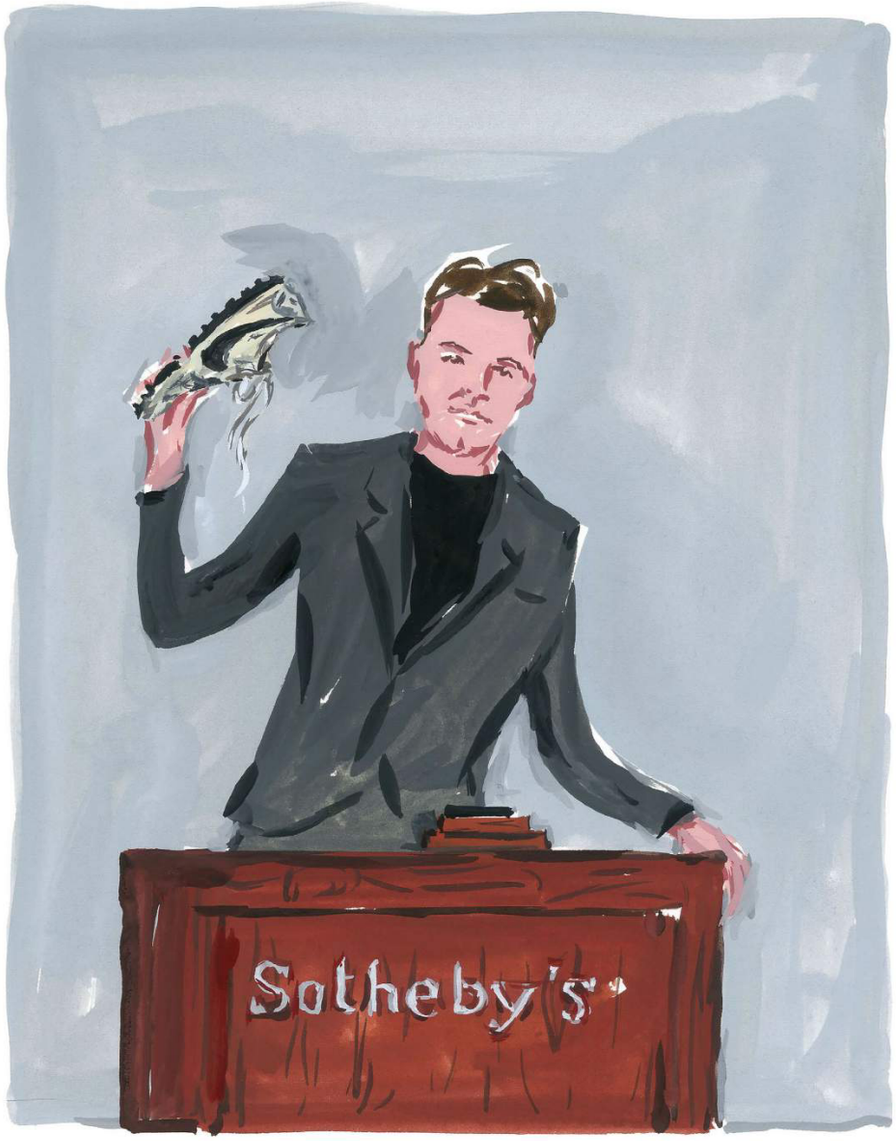
And so I kept going. New York, London, Milan and Paris. Carrying heavy bags stuffed with clothes I would only wear once, dealing with front-row politics, watching models go by. Sometimes there was a spark, a tear. A moment of utter creation, beauty, of communion even. Not enough to bring me back to the joy.

One day my sister came to meet me in Paris. Eager to make her happy, I decided to pull a favour and take her to a really sought-after show. I was so proud to finally open the doors of the dream to her. We were seated on the front row between two famous actresses. The show was joyful and inspiring, and I thought to myself, 'Wow, she got the whole package!' Afterwards, we walked silently for a long 10 minutes, before she turned to me and said, 'I don't know how you do this. That was the worst thing I have ever been to. It was so fake and sad and depressing.' Her words hurt. I was insulted and incredibly angry. I told her she was ungrateful and spoiled, that tickets to a show like that was like gold dust. I stayed angry a while and we never talked about it again.

It all fell apart a few years later. There were panic attacks and tears, and I finally broke down, collapsing before a show. From there I began a long road to rediscovering who I was. I started picking and choosing the shows I attended. Then I suddenly realized that I could miss more shows, and more, and more. Until one day, I knew I was done with fashion weeks.

It was a risk. I knew I would lose jobs and all those new Instagram influencers would take my spot. But I realized that I was happy to leave it to the people who still loved it – and I'd deal with the consequences later. Slowly my life became mine again and as time went on, I understood that my love of fashion could thrive in different places and in different ways.

So here I am. Paris Fashion Week is starting tomorrow and I can only smile at how happy I am that it is no longer part of my life. I wish the very best to all my friends getting ready for the big shows – but I am flying away.



Hammer time

Why today's sneakerheads shop at Sotheby's. By Noah Wunsch. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme

My first online-only auction in my new role running global e-commerce for Sotheby's was a single lot made up of every model of Supreme skateboard deck ever manufactured. The sale was to happen during our January 2019 Americana Week, during which decorative arts, manuscripts and memorabilia are sold in several auctions, and are top of our clients' minds. There, on the seventh floor of our New York City headquarters, surrounded by letters from Alexander Hamilton and George Washington, were 248 skateboards featuring artwork by Jeff Koons, George Condo, Richard Prince, and many other blue-chip artists whose works have sold for millions in Sotheby's contemporary-art auctions. The night before the auction's close, however, we had received exactly zero bids on a sale that felt 'sink or swim' for me. I stayed afloat: the bids came in during the last five minutes of the auction's close, as beads of sweat ran down my forehead. New category collectors are digitally native, and recognize the value in waiting for that countdown clock to turn red. In the end, the boards sold for $800,000 – to a 17-year-old in Vancouver.

It's a fascinating time in the art and luxury market. Traditional luxury brands have recognized the value in production transparency: providing customers with a specific number of produced pieces (known as an "edition run") drives interest. It's similar to prints in the art world: a David Hockney print from an edition run of 50 is likely to be more valuable than one from an edition run of 250 (I say "likely" because there are various heuristics that go into pricing works, but scarcity is certainly important). Similarly, a Louis Vuitton skateboard, manufactured by Supreme in 2000, is more valuable than other boards in the collection, because the production run was pulled after Louis Vuitton sent Supreme a cease-and-desist letter for the unauthorized use of its logo.

Even before the success of the Supreme sale, I had wanted to do a sneaker auction. The category's growth over the past decade has been astronomical. It's an industry worth over $60 billion, and has created a secondary market worth anything from $300 million to $1 billion. Similar to categories like art, jewellery, watches, and others offered in Sotheby's auctions, there are clear criteria that serious sneaker collectors use to decide value. Are the shoes in pristine shape or game worn? Who designed them? Are they from a specific production run? Are they associated with a historic moment? The list goes on, as does the process for authentication (which includes stitching, colourway, and even smell). Sneakers are universal – nearly everyone has a pair – and just like the art you hang on your walls, the shoes you put on your feet convey a message.

To build our sneaker auction, Sotheby's found an amazing partner in Stadium Goods, the premier sneaker and streetwear marketplace, which helped put together our *Ultimate Sneaker Collection*. It comprised 100 of the rarest sneakers, including the 1972 Nike Moon Shoes, created by Bill Bowerman, co-founder of Nike and Oregon State's famed track coach, of which only about a dozen pairs were made. To the best of our knowledge, the pair offered in the *Ultimate Sneaker Collection* was the only unworn pair in existence. Think about that – billions, likely trillions, of shoes have been produced over the last six or seven decades, yet one of the original prototypes, which would set off a new sphere of design, fashion, and sport, has been left unworn for 47 years.

The pair had a low estimate of $110,000 and a high estimate of $170,000. Was I surprised that they sold? No. Was I surprised that they ended up breaking the record for most expensive pair of sneakers ever sold at auction, going for $437,500? Honestly, a little. But the significance of that pair as a cultural totem is real.

People speculated that we would see a similar result to the Supreme sale – surely only young people would be interested in the category. So did a 17-year-old in Vancouver buy them? Was the collector a hypebeast? In the end, one buyer purchased the entire collection: Miles Nadal, a middle-aged businessman and rare car collector, who saw a similar beauty in the production design of the sneakers.

Luxury collectibles are new market categories, just as stamps, coins and watches once were. Their utilitarian nature drives scarcity, which increases interest and value. It's not the last time the record will be broken, and it definitely won't be the last sneaker auction at Sotheby's.

Queer eye for Chinese guys

Can fashion save China from straight men's terrible taste? By Huang Hung. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme

Traditional Chinese culture is all about the straight man. Confucius pretty much decided they are the only people who matter to society. Western fashion managed to disrupt that culture. First there were the metro-sexuals, and now surveys reveal that Chinese millennials in major cities are openly accepting LGBTQ lifestyles. Diversity seems to have successfully disrupted straight-man culture.

For a while, Jing Xing, a dancer, theatre director and the most famous trans person in China, ruled the airwaves. With her talk show and a number of other hit shows, including *Venus Hits Mars* and *Chinese Dating*, she led the ratings by bashing straight-man culture and encouraging women to stand up to bullying and sexual harassment. She was accompanied by a wave of young actors who took over Chinese screens with their feminine, skinny looks. They built up such fan bases on the Internet that the government and state media decided to cast them in political propaganda films in a desperate attempt to be relevant. This angered quite a few princelings – the ruling class descended from Communist party icons – who saw their revered forefathers portrayed by androgynous young men who represented the antithesis of Chinese machismo.

So the princelings fought back. In an attempt to return the straight man to his rightful place at the pinnacle of Chinese culture, they made a series of Chinese *Rambo*-style movies called *Wolf Warrior* (it worked: *Wolf Warrior 2* is the highest grossing movie in Chinese history). They banned Jing Xing from television. They created an auto-delete mechanism to remove the word homosexual from social media. One Chinese TV director even went on air and accused women executives at television stations of promoting feminine-looking men because they were their toy boys. The backlash was real – and until recently, it definitely had me worried.

This summer, Tencent News, a division of media and technology conglomerate Tencent, created an online variety show called *1,068 Soul-Searching Questions*, which was half survey and half group therapy. I was one of the guests. For the first hour of the live event, 20 guests in the studio answered survey questions, while a couple of million people watching the show took the same survey online. There was also a prerecorded section featuring a group therapy session with the 20 guests, who were mostly young and from all walks of life. So what did these "soul-searching" questions reveal about the Chinese people?

Above all, we believe our parents did a horrible job raising us. So much so that 77% of people who took the survey during the first show agreed that anyone intending to have children should have to pass a nationally organized test. There is the generation gap; in fact, it's more of a chasm than a gap!

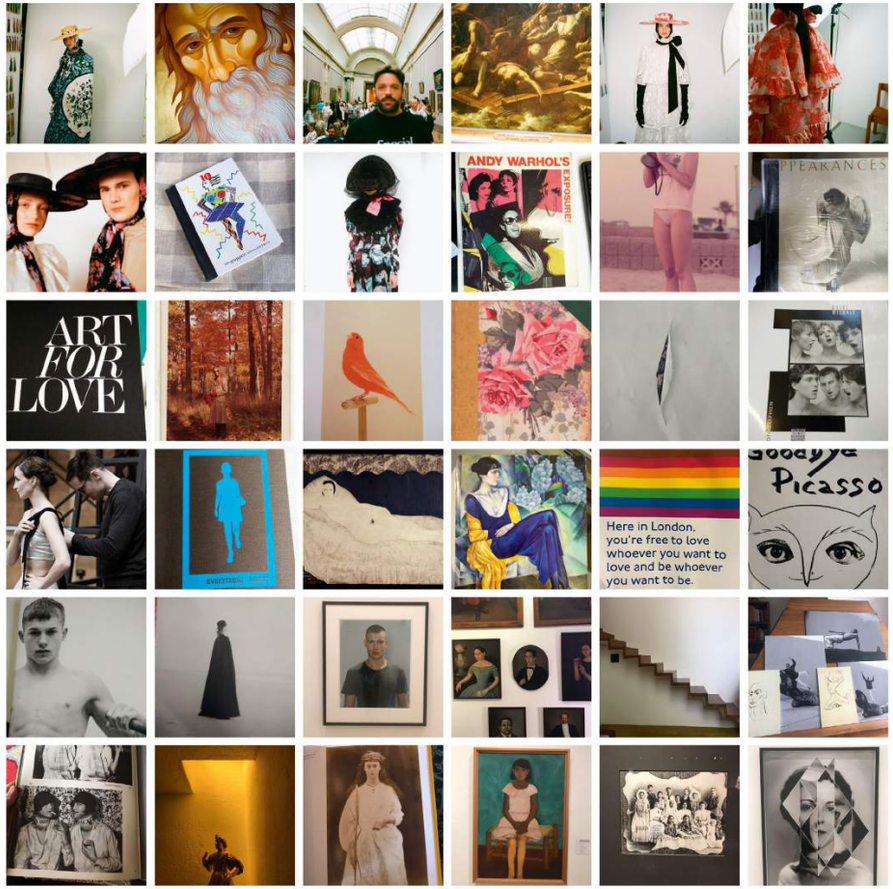
The stories that people told were amazing: one insurance saleswoman said her parents had made her skip college and start working after high school so that she could pay for her brother to go to college. She had later also been forced to fund his wedding. She had finally cut off her parents three weeks before the show. Another woman who worked as a designated driver for drunks at night said she always preferred driving women or gay men because they never harassed her. All straight men, she said, would try to grope her.

Secondly, 80% of all surveyed believe that Chinese straight men are guilty of bad taste. Even straight men themselves agreed. Among the guests, a man who owned a delivery service said: 'I am straight, and I know I have horrible taste.' He stood up and yelled in desperation for a queer eye: 'Can someone gay please help me?' A lawyer began defending straight men, saying that men should focus on making money and not frivolous things like clothes, before a tech entrepreneur corrected him: 'Oh please, if I can look good when I am coding, you can look better when you are lawyering.'

It was just an online show, but I felt strangely relieved after my *1,068 Soul-Searching Questions* experience. Despite all the official efforts to remove, suppress and generally knock diversity out of Chinese lives and culture, it felt like proof that hope remained. Maybe fashion still has the power to save the Chinese from the terrible fate of being led by *Wolf Warrior* straight men with bad taste, after all.

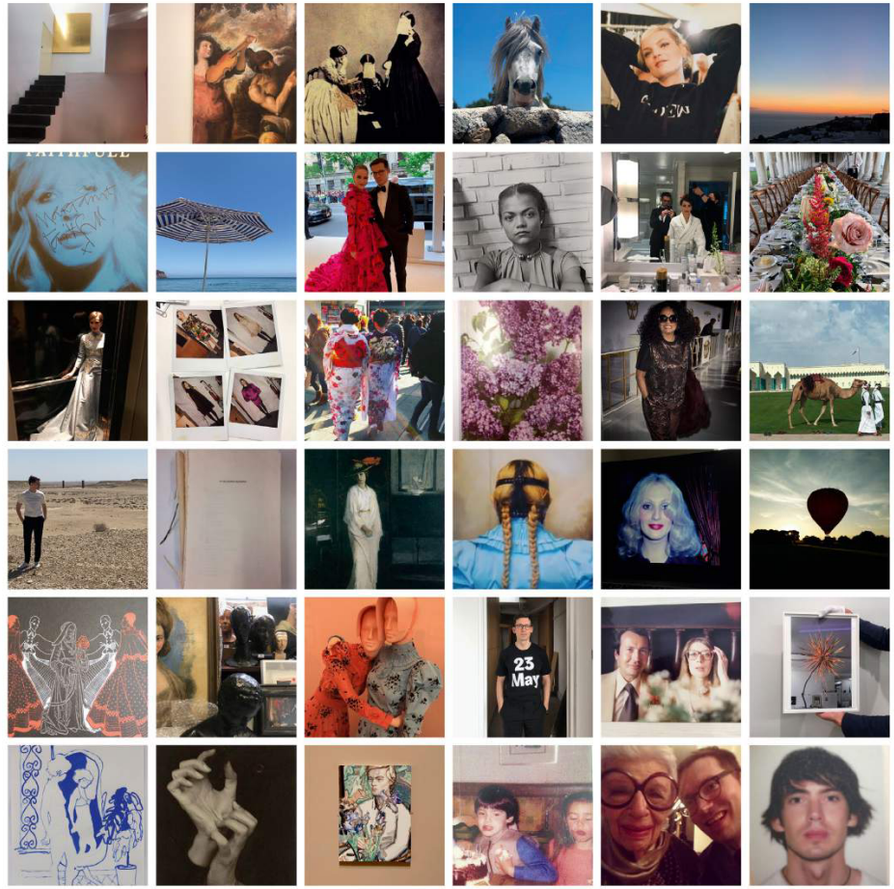
Camera roll

By Erdem Moralıoğlu



Théodore Géricault, *Scène de Naufrage*; Kerstin Wickman, *10-Gruppen Monstertryck*; *Andy Warhol's Exposure*; Anne Collier, *Women with Cameras*; Martin Harrison, *Appearances: Fashion Photography Since 1945*; Thomas Lohr, *Birds*; Cecil Beaton's Scrapbook, 1937; Lisa Z. Morgan, *Design Behind Desire*; Duane Michals, *Photographien*; Royal Ballet, *Vogue*; Isabel Garces and Alfonso Morales, *Everything Passes*; Foujita, *Nu couché à la toile de Jouy*; from Albert Kostenovich, *Russia: French and Russian Master Paintings, 1870-1925*; Douglas Duncan and Pablo Picasso *Goodbye Picasso*; Luke Smalley, *David, Gymnasium*; Rineke Dijkstra, *Heaven IV*; The Dolly Sisters, *Stars of the Twenties*; Victorian Gallery at the National Portrait Gallery; Museo Frida Kahlo; Andrea Geyer, *Constellations* (2018).

Germán Venegas at Museo Tamayo; Susanne Schapowalow, *Earlha Kitt*; Romaine Brooks, *The White Bird*; Mitch Epstein, Wolfgang Tillmans; Lisa Brice; Georgia O'Keeffe, *Hands*; Elizabeth Peyton, *Aire and Angeb*.



‘It’s cultural provocation, but in the most tasteful way.’

Ibrahim Kamara uses the language of fashion to challenge every kind of stereotype.

By Rana Toofanian
Photographs by Paolo Roversi
Styling and illustrations by Ibrahim Kamara

From left to right: Amadou wears jacket and trousers by Louis Vuitton. Shirt and tie by Celine. Watch by Cartier. Shoes by J.M. Weston. Cherif wears jacket and trousers by Berluti. Shirt by Gucci. Tie by Celine. Watch, bracelet and ring by Cartier. Shoes by J.M. Weston. Thomas wears jacket, trousers, shirt and tie by Celine. Watch, ring and bracelet by Cartier. All masks and umbrellas by Ibkamarastudios.

Athena wears dress by Louis Vuitton. Shoes by Versace. Hat and beak by Ibkamarastudios.

Rufei wears top and skirt by Moncler 4 Simone Rocha. Gloves by Adriana Hot Couture.
Belt, underskirt, parasol and back pieces by Ibkamarastudios. Shoes by Erdem.
Earrings by Samuel François. Earring (worn in hair) and necklace by Aurélie Bidermann.

All wear dresses and shoes by Erdem, capes and crowns by Costume Studio, gloves by Ibkamarastudios, and tights by Calzedonia.
From left to right: Maty wears earrings by Samuel François. Mahany wears earrings by Samuel François and ring by Cartier.
Rouguy wears earrings by Aurélie Bidermann and bracelet (worn as brooch) and ring by Cartier.

All wear skirt, tie, belt and headpiece by Ibkamarastudios.
From left to right : Cherif wears shirt by Salvatore Ferragamo. Shoes by J.M. Weston.
Brahim wears shirt by Celine. Shoes by J.M. Weston.
Rouguy wears shirt by Gucci. Shoes by Celine.

All wear earrings by Ibkamarastudios and underwear by Intimissimi.
From left to right: Maty wears belt worn as top by Ibkamarastudios. Shoes by Christian Dior.
Mahany wears shoes by Bottega Veneta. Rouguy wears shoes by Bottega Veneta.

Rufei wears bodysuit, coat, boots and bag by Moncler x Richard Quinn.
Belt by Ibkamarastudios.

Mahany wears dress, earrings and body jewellery by Alexander McQueen.
Hat by Costume Studio. Spiders on dress by Ibkamarastudios.

Cherif wears jacket, skirt and trousers by Gucci. Tie by Ibkamarastudios.
Socks by Falke. Shoes by J.M. Weston. Watch by Cartier.

Amadou, Brahim, Thomas and Cherif wear jeans by Edwin, hats by Costume Studio, and shoes by J.M. Weston.
From left to right: Amadou wears necklace, watch and ring by Cartier.
Brahim wears watch and ring by Cartier. Thomas wears watch by Cartier.

Cherif wears skirt by Salvatore Ferragamo. Skirt, tie, belt and headpiece by Ibkamarastudios.

Models Rufei at Supreme, Rouguy at The Claw, Athena at Studio Paris, Mahany at Oui, Matty at Girl Mgmt, Amadou at TIAD, Brahim at M Management, Thomas at Premium, Cherif at The Claw. Producer: Jeanne Schmitt.
Studio managers: Anna Hägglund and Alina Peczek. Digital operator: Matteo Miani. Hair stylist: Yannick d'Is. Hair assistant: Michael Thanh. Set designer: Jean-Hugues de Chatillon.
Make-up artist: Thom Walker. Manicurist: Typhaine Kersual. Casting director: Mischa Notcutt. Executive producer: Camilla Mendez at Cream. Production coordinator: Angélique Boureau, Tatou Tounkara at Cream.
Photo assistants: Chiara Vittorini, Clara Belleville. Styling assistants: Sasha Harris, Ewa Kluczenko, Gareth Wrighton. Make-up assistant: Miki Matsunaga, Jasmine Lundmark, Jay Kwan.

Mahany wears earring by Ibkamarastudios.
Underwear by Intimissimi.

'In my world, there are no total looks,' says Ibrahim Kamara of his unconventional approach to styling. After all, you're just as likely to find a hat handmade in his bedroom as the statement piece in a fashion image, as you are anything with a designer label. In a remarkably short space of time – he only graduated in 2016 – the 29-year-old, Sierra Leone-born, London-raised visionary has fashioned a space all of his own: one where the policing of masculinity, the rich cultural variety of the African diaspora, and the erotic collide with fierce power.

A born storyteller, Kamara grew up without access to TV or the Internet; the catalyst, perhaps, for the folkloric, fantastical world-building that has now become his signature. Working as an assistant to legendary stylists Barry Kamen and Judy Blame while studying fashion communications and promotion at Central Saint Martins, Kamara has reconfigured the eclectic, knockabout spirit of the celebrated 1980s Buffalo movement for the present day, using its DIY approach to carve a thrillingly new – and implicitly political – take on the relationship between fashion and identity. A regular contributor to *British Vogue*, *Vogue Italia* and *M, le magazine du Monde*, in July, Kamara was appointed senior fashion editor at large at *i-D*, the magazine where his heroes also learned their trade.

Slipping in and out of his alter egos with chameleonic ease – from the 'sensitive thug' character he adopted in his early days to his latest double, Sinegal – Kamara uses the language of fashion to challenge stereotypes of all sorts, but most importantly to create a brave new world where his sensuality, and sexuality, can roam free. Or, in his own words: 'I think reality is what we make of it,' he says. 'I live in my own little world, 24 hours of the day, and I love that world.'

Rana Toofanian: You were born in Sierra Leone and came to the UK by way of the Gambia aged 16. Tell me about your upbringing.

Ibrahim Kamara: I had a very happy upbringing. Back in Sierra Leone, we were living in nature; our home was next to the sea. We were a very big family. I grew up with my step-grandmother and my aunties and uncles. My mum had already left for England in 1994 with my younger sister. We didn't have a TV, so as children we just played outside and in the streets until 11 or 12 at night. The Gambia had the same energy. We didn't have access to many things, so we would use our imaginations to create characters and run around the little town. I loved my childhood in Africa – some of my best memories are from growing up there.

It must have been difficult to leave that all behind.

The transition was very hard. All of a sudden, at the age of 16, I had to leave all my friends and move to England. My mother had already been in London for 15 years, and in all that time apart, I hadn't seen her. The school system here was completely different. I was thrown straight into a college with these really intense kids who were smoking and cursing and talking back to the teachers. It was all very weird. I was very lonely at that time, and I watched a lot of MTV, which really improved my knowledge of pop culture. I hadn't grow up with the Internet or TV, so I hadn't been exposed to all that. I had actually lived day to day until then, just talking with my siblings and family.

Do you think that limited access nurtured your imagination and creativity?

Absolutely. When you put kids in a room and they don't have access to TV or the Internet, they are forced to use their imagination. My friends and I would make up all these little games and characters, and our uncles and aunts would tell us stories. I don't think I have ever grown out of that mindset. I still see the world as a child and I think that really helps. I have to achieve a vision by any means. If something is not available, then I have to make it. A child would think like that.

What were your earliest interactions with fashion?

Even though my father is the imam of a mosque, I grew up Christian because my mother was Christian.[1] I remember at the age of six or seven, going to have our church clothes made. The tailor would ask us what we wanted to wear and we chose our own fabrics. It was very personal, but I didn't look at it as fashion. Growing up in the 1990s, my aunties were influenced by Jamaican and Afro-American culture. I would see how they were dressed when they went clubbing, and I wanted to grow up so badly to look and be like them. I was only six years old at that time, but I thought they had incredible style; I still

'Back in Sierra Leone, I didn't grow up with TV or the Internet. I actually lived day to day, just talking with my siblings and family.'

'I grew up in 1990s Sierra Leone before the war.
From the age of four, I remember all the street parties. This is a reflection of that spirit.'

do. They didn't have *fashion*, but they had *style*.

You began studying medicine before dropping out to attend Central Saint Martins...
I was three years into my studies, and I don't remember exactly what happened, but I just lost interest. I made a deal with my mother to take a year out to find myself. I came across Live,[2] which was a youth magazine run out of Brixton. One day I stumbled onto a set where an editor was styling an old man, and I just thought what she was doing was cool. After my year was up, I had to break it to my mum that I wasn't going to go back to studying medicine. That was one of the hardest things I've ever done – confessing to an African woman that I was not going to become a doctor. She was heartbroken. She had all these dreams of what her son should be, her ideas of what success should look like, and I said no to all of that. That is how I fell into the world of fashion. I didn't know anything back then, but I was intrigued and had an intuition that it was something I wanted to explore.

How was your experience at Central Saint Martins?
It was life-changing. Before I got into Central Saint Martins, I went back to college and did a two-year degree in art and design at Westminster Kingsway. At CSM, I realized that I loathed everything I had been doing before; it wasn't cool anymore, and now I just wanted to be cool. No one there wanted to work for the big magazines. They all rejected that kind of establishment. They were rebels. I was still living at home with my African mother, who noticed all of these changes in me. I used to look like every other kid on the block, in tracksuits and jeans. Then, all of a sudden, I was wearing tights and boots and had my ears pierced. I started going clubbing, too. I wanted to look like the people there, the kids in my class, my peers; I wanted to wear lingerie and a bomber jacket to school because that's what everyone else was doing. I would hide my clothes in my bag when I left home, change and run to the bus. It was all a rush. The only world that mattered to me was Saint Martins. You change every year you are there, and by the time you are in your fourth year, you are transformed. It wasn't just what I wore or the things I looked at either. My take on religion also completely changed. I used to go to church every Sunday and then I became an atheist. I looked at the world differently, in a more loving way. I became more confident in my sexuality; I had gay and trans friends. There was no judgement anymore. I am so comfortable in my own skin due to my experiences there. I went in there thinking I had this very specific idea of what I wanted to be and came out realizing that I can be whoever I want.

You assisted Barry Kamen[3] while you were there and you've previously described him as having been a mentor. How did that relationship inform your approach to fashion and styling?
I came across Barry's work with Neneh Cherry, and remember thinking, 'If I were to be a stylist, that's how I would style.' This was during my time at Saint Martins when we were all really fucked up in the head and wanted to tear things apart. It wasn't even about being cool anymore, it was all about being new. I e-mailed him my work and he responded explaining that he wasn't styling much any more, but thought I was exciting and loved my stuff. The following week, we had a coffee at his office. We didn't talk about fashion at all; we talked about everything else on the planet, except for fashion. We connected about politics and culture. For me, he was always ahead of his time, in the way he thought and the way he styled. The story he wanted to tell was always bigger and more important than the clothes or the collections. Barry always really encouraged me to do my own thing. He created an environment where there was no right or wrong to my thinking, where everything was accepted. His studio was always open to me and I had access to all his stuff. Barry became more like a father figure to me. We were always talking, laughing and coming up with the craziest ideas, like two little boys. We were both so excited by each other. When he passed away, I was really hurt. I lost my best friend and my mentor at the same time. After that, I didn't know who else to work for aside from Judy [Blame], because Judy made stuff.

'I used to look like every other kid, in a tracksuit and jeans. Then, once I got to Saint Martins, I was wearing tights and boots and had my ears pierced.'

Barry was the poster boy for the Buffalo scene.[4] The eclectic references, multicultural representation and transgressive masculinity of your work evoke a similar spirit. How did Buffalo shape your own creative outlook?
When Barry gave me the Buffalo book,[5]

'For some reason I was looking at a lot of chicken images while I was working on this story. So we made a hat with fake feathers and a beak to go with it.'

I started looking at Ray Petri's work and attempting to study it. But I don't think you can learn Buffalo. You can only experience the spirit of it, and that is what Barry instilled in me. To me, Buffalo means having a hunger and thirst for culture, to be fearless, to go to the end of the world to create new narratives. That is what Barry always pushed me to do. Buffalo is very stylish, but there's a lot of thinking behind it, like putting Pakistani boys in suits with English flags wrapped around their waists. That is quite brave, that is saying something that goes beyond styling. It's cultural provocation, but in the most tasteful way.

In 2016, you and photographer Jamie Morgan collaborated on an editorial for *Dazed* titled 'The Other Paris, Rue de Regard', an ode to Barry, who had passed away a year earlier. In it, young Franco-African men you had street-cast from gay clubs, subways and strip clubs near Château Rouge[6] were captured in a poignant but liberating fusion of fake luxury goods, sportswear, bridal gowns and heels. One of the story's most striking images pictures a seemingly pregnant young man wearing jeans and a headwrap. Tell me about the concept behind the shoot and why it felt like a fitting tribute...

It was my first editorial for *Dazed*. After Barry passed away, I was at a very traumatic point in my life. Those were some of the ideas I wanted to explore that I had discussed with him and that we would laugh about. He thought I was so brave to be talking about pregnant black boys. It was funny to him. The African community in France experiences so much discrimination. They are not as visible or as integrated as we are in the UK. London is such a multicultural city, but when I am in Paris, it is so divided. I wanted to highlight the beauty of these everyday people, of African immigrants, and what they bring to Paris. It would have been easier for us to photograph a pregnant girl, but for me, that isn't exciting. A boy in jeans is so relatable, and by the time you turn him pregnant and put him in a headwrap, you are saying a lot. He is born as part of a generation of young, black African men in France experiencing the struggles of discrimination. It hurts my feelings because some of these people have degrees; they are doctors back home. They come to the West in the hope of a better life, but instead they are shut out. We also photographed a boy in a wedding dress. For me, that is punk. An African man taking a walk in Paris in a wedding dress, irrespective of all the things he has to face, that is as punk as it gets. It's a total fuck you. There were all of these subtle political messages and ideas in the photographs – enough to make people aware but not scare them away, so that they could still come to their own conclusions of what the images were trying to say.

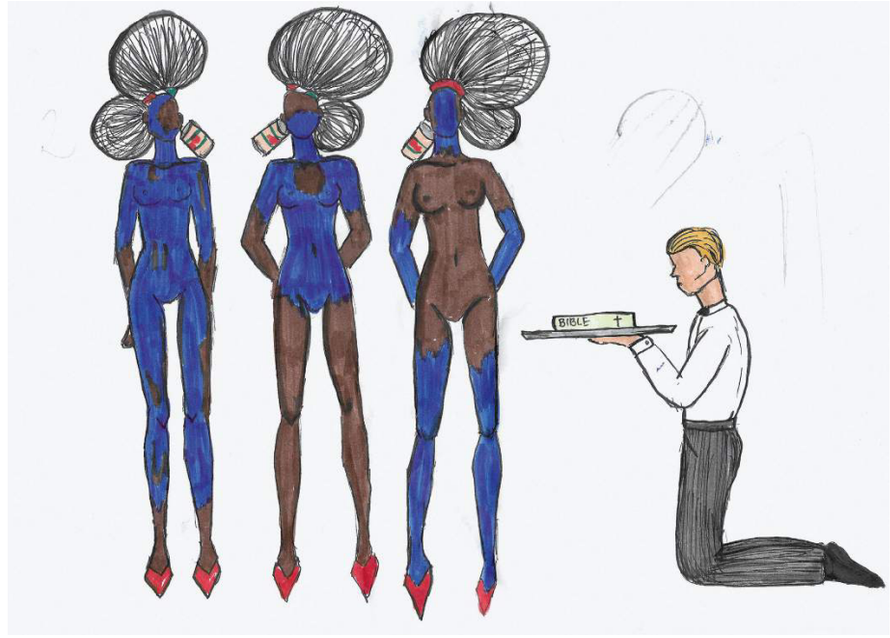
When that story was published you said you hoped that it would change something. Do you think that fashion imagery has the power to affect real change?

It goes back to my past, to growing up in Sierra Leone. It was very political. Being at home, listening to the news, hearing all these very intellectual, politically driven conversations about the world. It was constant news, and the news was where I also consumed pictures and advertising. I am mostly drawn to things that have a narrative. When I create pictures, I develop written narratives and backgrounds for all the characters and think about what each character is saying in a frame. I genuinely hope that my photos spark something in people's hearts, that they are not just a thing you flick past and put away. I hope that people want to stop and analyse them, that it inspires young kids and older people alike to seek out my references or to try to understand and relate to my work.

Africa is obviously an important theme and source of inspiration. In what ways do you feel your past is represented in the work you produce and ideas you cultivate?

I see the world through my past experiences and how I can project them into a new space. My youth in Sierra Leone is always my first point of reference. There was something exciting about growing up in Africa. There were no fashion magazines telling you what to wear. You just make it up as you go along, which I think is so stylish. The most stylish people live in parts of the world where there is no one telling them what is hot or trendy. Sierra Leone is a colourful place – the woods, the beach, the way people carry things on their head, product placements in an African market – the way they know nothing about how the modern world thinks of marketing, but they can sell you anything. All those elements are reflected in my work and

'A boy in jeans in Paris is so relatable, but by the time you turn him pregnant and put him in a headwrap, you are saying a lot.'



'This is me imagining black women as gods.
I love the colour blue as it means life.
They are wearing cans as earrings; you can imagine why.'

are things I review when I'm writing a story or sketching ideas. When I go back to Africa, I see kids there now who have access to the Internet taking inspiration from China and Europe, and combining it with what they already know. There are new subcultures coming out of it: new ways to dress, new music, new pictures. I find all this newness so exciting.

You frequently use the word 'new'. Why do you think you are so drawn to novelty?
I am compelled by progress in culture, especially when people take ordinary, everyday items and turn them into something new. Because I am from that part of the world, I can relate to people striving to create something that is new or hasn't been seen before, especially because the Western world has long been what is considered cool, edgy and new in fine art, music, and fashion. In Lagos, the kids who are skateboarding don't skate the way they do in America. It is punk; it is fresh and new. They take elements of what they see of skate culture and absorb it into their own culture to create something different. That is what I strive for with every story I do. I want to bring new things into the world. I am always summoning new ideas; I will wake up in the morning and start the day by writing. I am the worst person to watch a movie with because I screenshot every scene. Each one is an idea and for me, it's about how I mash them up with my own experiences. I never want my last story to reflect my new one; there might be elements but they must be developed. I reference the past but without holding on to it.

How do these stories materialize from conception to creation?
First of all, there is a lot of writing involved. I watch movies and I write about the characters, but I don't see the styling in my head at all. Then I decide what I'm trying to convey, which allows me to see if I need to build stuff. In that case, me and my team – Sasha and Joseph, and my friend [designer] Gareth Wrighton on certain projects – all experiment together and then sketch everything in-house to see if it all looks right. After that we look at colours and then I start looking at the collections to see if they align with what I want to say. Fittings are usually over the course of two days and we match the clothes with what was sketched on paper. I like to know exactly what I'm going to do on set, so if we change something it won't be too drastic. Barry used to do all the fittings on me, so if we were going to do 20 styles, he would style everything on me. He had immaculate attention to detail, so I try to take that with me.

You mentioned movies. Do you have a favourite?
I think my favourite is *August: Osage County* with Meryl Streep,[7] which is about a woman with cancer and the way in which her family has to come together and take care of her. It is about human forgiveness and love. I definitely need to do an editorial on that. Another highlight would be *Cloud Atlas*, which is so full of meaning, and *Apocalypto*, which has some really great costumes.[8]

Someone once described your work as future-leaning and utopian, while also paying homage to stylists of the past. Is this a fair and accurate observation?
It pays homage to the spirit of some of the people before me who I think are incredible and who all brought something new into culture – Barry Kamen, Ray Petri, Judy Blame, Panos Yiapanis. I love the American *Vogues* of the 1960s and 1970s, that era when things were so imaginative, where they travelled and told stories so the viewer could really dream. That is how I want my work to be. I want it to be like an advertisement. The reason brands pay for ads and placements is for people to look at them. If they don't stop to look at them, then they have failed their purpose. I want you to flick through a magazine and look twice at something I've created, and try to analyse what I am saying. To me, that is what advertising is supposed to do. Even if you don't want to buy the dress, it stays as a memory deep inside your brain.

Panos once talked about his feelings of frustration as a stylist in relation to the ownership of images. He said that it was always about either the designer or the photographer, and that as a stylist he often felt like he was floating somewhere in between, as a 'perennial gypsy'. Do you ever feel like that?
I have recently because I really invest a lot of my heart and soul into every story that I make. I don't think that it is fair that a photographer is the only one who owns the picture. I think that is so outdated. I am not just a stylist. I use my imagination. I build characters. I research as much as the photographer does. It takes time to put things

'Buffalo was stylish, but there's a lot of thinking behind it, like putting Pakistani boys in suits with English flags wrapped around their waists.'

'Religious identity played a big role in my upbringing. Born to a Christian mother and a Muslim dad, I have always been drawn to those kinds of conversations. I also feel it's great to celebrate young Jewish men of all races; the black Jewish boy in Ethiopia listening to Jay-Z is just as Jewish as anyone else.'

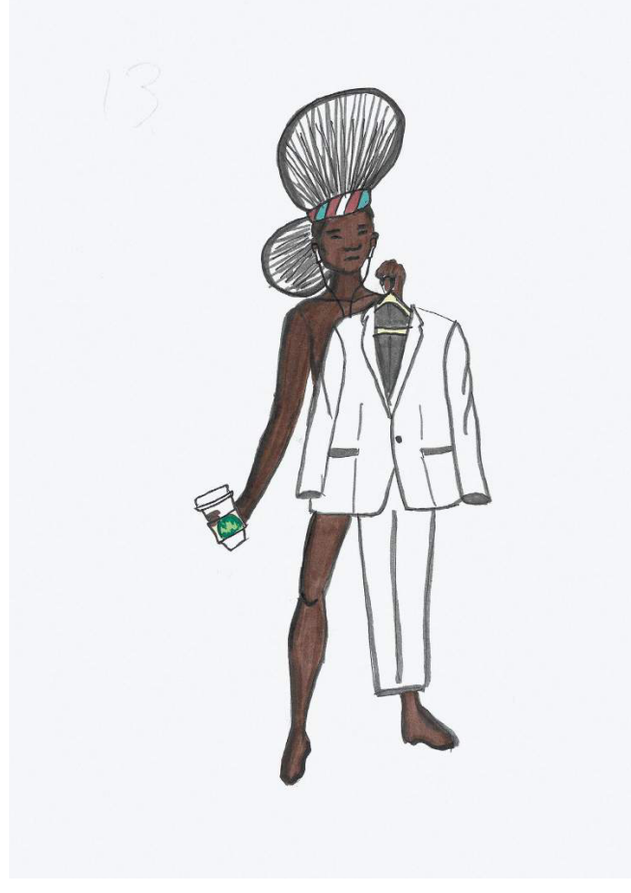
together. Before we shoot, we do many fittings, many ideas are explored and trialled. I think very carefully about how it is going to look on camera before we shoot. Usually, I have invested my own money into it and actually made the costumes. To go through all that hard work, and then have someone else make an executive decision to turn a colour photograph into a black-and-white one just because they love the aesthetic, is very disheartening to me. It kills the culture of the image, the character is dead, and it is no longer what it was supposed to be. A photo is not made by one person. There are some mornings when I wake and think, 'I am going to take the photos myself because I am really fed up.' I think that might drive me to want to direct films eventually. I write a lot, I have written two things I want to direct, so I think I will do that, and maybe that is where my characters will fully come to light.

There is a growing trend for designers to enforce strict terms on how their looks are shown in editorials, like insisting that full runway looks are not mixed with pieces from other designers. How do you feel about that?
It is a shame that we are heading down a path where everything has to look the same. Imposing another stylist's vision on me is really problematic, especially with editorials. In my world, there are no full looks. I create my characters. I get where the brands are coming from and that they want to maintain their identity, but the people who consume the brands don't want the full look. You are telling the ordinary person how to dress and that is not how humans think; they take things and put them together. It's unfair that this is now so strictly imposed on stylists, especially my generation of stylists who are now breaking through. It will kill creativity. Isn't it more exciting to see the clothes that you have designed in another totally different way? If there is no self-expression, it becomes advertising. It is no longer styling.

Has your method of dissecting, distorting and recontextualizing ideas for editorial narratives ever been a hindrance or restricted with whom you've been able to collaborate?
I am sure there are people who don't want to work with me because of my process. When I request things, they sometimes ask, 'Is this going to be shot in full? Who is going to wear it?' Such questions are irrelevant to me and the way I see the world. The person I am going to put in that dress has a richer history than the dress itself. Take the dress away and they remain the person they have always been. I don't think I will ever do a photo with a full look. In my mind, that would be copying another stylist's work and that would go against everything I stand for and believe in.

One reason we're sitting here today is *2026*, a captivating collaborative project you produced with South African photographer Kristin-Lee Moolman while you were still a student at Central Saint Martins. The images in that series present a utopian vision of African men in a future time and place where race and gender don't have the same meaning as they do now. I've read that you first connected with Moolman through Instagram, and only met her in person once you'd flown to Johannesburg for the story. How did you work together to achieve your vision?
Before Barry passed away, I talked to him about wanting to travel. He encouraged me to go and said there was nothing more freeing than being in another land creating, unaffected by what is going on at home. That was what *2026* was really about. I bought my ticket using my student loan, got on a plane and went. I had wanted to work with Kristin because I loved the way that she photographs the new African experience. I chose Johannesburg because I felt that it was the most progressive African city at the time. I knew it was going to be way more impactful to photograph those ideas on the streets of Africa, a place the world thinks of as dangerous, than in a studio in London. Even though I had done a lot of research, the end result was surprising. Kristin and I immersed ourselves in the project for a month. We rarely had access to the Internet and I hardly spoke to my friends back home. Having no outside influences meant we could push our ideas further. I was clubbing in Johannesburg. The youth there were so radical, the artists and musicians were breaking away from tradition to do their own thing. It was like London, but new. It was the perfect environment for experimenting with ideas. All the boys and girls we photographed as part of the project were incredible people who I felt had a different mindset; they had

'We sketch everything in-house. After that we look at colours and then I start looking at the collections to see if they align with what I want to say.'



'My family still doesn't understand what I do, so I feel this is how they probably think I go to work. This idea is also a reflection of modern man: work comes first and he is always on the go.'

abandoned their parents' way of looking at the world. They could really connect with the work and stories we were trying to tell. That is why it felt so personal in the end.

Who were the people in the photographs and how did you find them?
Some were Kristin's friends, some we met in the clubs and on the street. We put every photograph we made on a wall, and within two weeks it was full of pictures. When we found someone, we would bring them into the room to show them and explain, 'This is the world we are building', and 99% of the time they would say, 'I want to be part of that world.' We were cutting and making pieces, diving into dumpsters, sometimes we would pack stuff in the car and just get people off the street and style them there. It was a very experimental process. For the first time, I saw more of myself in the work I was doing. In a way, *2026* was really my coming-out story because those were the boys I wanted to look like in my head, but I was never brave enough. I was never bold enough to stand on the street wearing one shoe and different socks and a skirt and headpiece and an earring with no fucks to give. I really found myself on that trip and I came out to my family afterwards. I could not have done that without *2026*.

I'd like to discuss *Soft Criminal*, the second show you worked on with Kristin, which was your first large-scale exhibition.[9] Was that project an extension of *2026* or a separate entity?
Soft Criminal was born out of *2026*. After the initial idea came to me, I asked Gareth Wrighton to join me and Kristin in creating the story. I'm not a trained designer and I knew that if ever I was going to make clothing then I would need Gareth's eye. We chose a name early on, I pitched 'soft criminal' and it just stuck. Then we created a family of people – from kings to the queen and the agents – who were fighting for power to reflect what is going on in the world right now.

What does it mean to be a soft criminal?
During my second year at Central Saint Martins, I started to realize that I am an individual, even though I am a black man and the world might see me as a hardcore person. I have feelings; I am just as soft and vulnerable as any other man. I wanted to reflect that in my work, so I set up a Tumblr called Sensitive Thug. Soft criminals and sensitive thugs are people who are very hardcore – killing each other while fighting for power – but once you put your fears and insecurities about them aside, you may also start to glimpse their tenderness and humanity.

The subversion of stereotypes – specifically those related to masculinity and sexuality – have become recurring themes in your work. Why?
For a long time, I didn't know much about sexuality. In Africa, two men could hold hands and it was not because they were gay; they were just friends or family. Masculinity is so overemphasized in Western politics and entertainment. I wanted to change the way kids, my friends, and the people who look like me are seen. As black men, we are just as vulnerable as everybody. We all have emotions. We are not all as strong as you think we are. I wanted to highlight those individual identities of blackness and of my upbringing. Humans have a way of prejudging what a person's experiences are without getting to know the person. I am fascinated with how to fuck that up a bit.

Do you think that creating an idea through a fantasy can alter a person's perspective of that idea in the real world?
It can soften their perspective. It might never happen in the real world, but seeing it visualized in a photo has the potential to spark change. Imagine a muscular African man holding a briefcase and going to work in a wedding dress. Whatever you take from this image, it indicates that the person behind the dress is vulnerable and brave and that they have the strength to stand out.

Do you use fantasy as a way of vocalising what you perceive in reality?
Absolutely, my work takes things that are relatable in reality and exaggerates them through fantasy. Also, I feel fulfilled when living in a fantasy – it is more fun than my own reality.

The 'new Africa' movement is often associated with your work. What does that phrase mean to you?
It denotes young people of African heritage who haven't conformed to the stereotypical roles like they are supposed to. They are chaotic, but in the most tasteful and beautiful way. They

'Consumers don't buy full looks. Brands are telling ordinary people how to dress, but that isn't how humans think; they put different things together.'

'I am forever obsessed with Japan and how everything there is made with love and thought. I have been trying so hard over the past months to master colour placement and textures; it will take time, but the idea of all these elements working together is beautiful.'

are really pushing new ideas, the ones our mothers will be petrified of for decades. These kids are not studying to be scientists, doctors, or lawyers. They are going broke for new Africa, disappointing their parents in the most beautiful way. This movement is happening all over the continent and also among Africans in the Western world right now. That rawness and rebellion, that's what I think new Africa is.

The images in *2026* became part of a group show called *Utopian Voices, Here & Now*.[10] Its curator, Shonagh Marshall, said that it was the 'perfect example of using clothing to consider how it can construct identity'. Is it possible to use fashion in that way?
Absolutely – in fashion, art and music. For now, fashion is the part I have access to in order to tell my stories. At this stage in my life, I'm still figuring out what I want to say. I'm pushing myself to think more deeply and eventually I think I will find other mediums with which to tell the same narratives, probably more evolved, with more of a broken heart, and with more love and growth. I'm just so excited to explore those new forms.

Describe your own personal aesthetic and how it is affected by your work…
I find it very hard to dress myself, as usually when I put things together I am not happy. I have a basic uniform. My work is better when it's enhanced on other people. My work reflects my alter ego Sinegal. I think that is the person who is more aligned with what I do. Personally, I am more reserved. I try to keep my ideas for my work.

Sinegal was recently filmed and photographed for *Vogue Italia*. Who is he?
I am a Gemini and I have always felt that there are two sides to who I am. I'm still trying to figure out exactly who Sinegal is, but I experiment my most daring ideas with him. Having an alter ego allows me to go to extremes but somehow still keep myself apart.

In regards to your work, what motivates you right now on a broader level?
Pushing myself to create new narratives and ideas makes me so excited. As does the thought of creating something that has never been done before. All of the people I surround myself with are really ambitious and creative and that motivates me to continue. I get energy from them and they get energy from me – it is collective motivation.

Is there a fashion designer who you particularly admire?
Margiela every season. I am obsessed with John Galliano and everything he does at Margiela because I think that making something so conceptual become commercial is like winning. When you can make the ordinary person want to wear the craziest cut to the office – that is genius. I look forward to seeing the show every season.

You are the newly appointed senior fashion editor at large for *i-D*. What does this mean to you personally?
i-D is so connected to youth culture. As long as I feel young, I can project culture to the masses through *i-D* – that was one of the reasons why I agreed to take the job. My goal for now is to travel the world and tell stories.

1. Sierra Leone's population is approximately 78% Muslim and 20% Christian.

2. Founded in 2001, Live is an online magazine based in South London, written, illustrated, produced and distributed by people aged 14 to 25.

3. Barry Kamen and his twin brother Nick began their careers as key members of Ray Petri's Buffalo collective (see endnote 4). Both were successful models. Nick Kamen found overnight mainstream success in 1985 in an iconic advertisement for Levi's 501s, while Barry moved on to become a highly respected stylist. Barry died following a heart attack in 2015; he was 52.

4. Buffalo, an informal underground, multicultural, multidisciplinary creative collective, active in London between 1984 and 1989, was founded by stylist and designer Ray Petri. Members included photographers (Jamie Morgan and Cameron McVey), models (a teenage Naomi Campbell and Nick Kamen), and musicians (Neneh Cherry, whose hit 'Buffalo Stance' was a shout-out to the collective and co-written by Morgan and McVey). Petri died in 1989, but the collective's influence on contemporary fashion remains, paradoxically, both enormous and underestimated.

5. *Buffalo: The Life and Style of Ray Petri*, edited by Jamie Morgan and Mitzi Lorenz, and designed by Phil Bicker and Barry Kamen, was published in 2000 by powerHouse Books.

6. Château Rouge is a *quartier* of northern Paris in the 18th *arrondissement*. It is sometimes known as 'Little Africa' for its wealth of shops and businesses catering to the Greater Paris region's African-origin populations with a wide range of products and services, including food, textiles, clothing, cosmetics and cultural products.

7. *August: Osage County* is a 2013 feature film adapted by Tracy Letts from his play, directed by John Wells and featuring an all-star cast including Meryl Streep, Sam Shepard, Julia Roberts, Juliette Lewis, and Benedict Cumberbatch. In the *New Yorker*, David Denby wrote that the adaptation 'sits awkwardly on the screen' and that Streep 'gives a rare bad performance'.

8. *Cloud Atlas* (2012) is an adaptation of David Mitchell's 2004 time-travelling novel of the same name. Directed by the Wachowskis and Tom Tykwer, the film features six stories set in different eras in which the film's stars (including Tom Hanks and Halle Berry) all play a number of roles. The film split both critics and audiences. *Apocalypto*, directed by Mel Gibson in 2006, is set in 1502 in the waning Mayan civilization. Shot entirely in a modern-day approximation of Yucatec Mayan, the hyper-violent film was praised by filmmakers including Quentin Tarantino, Martin Scorsese, and Spike Lee, who put it on his 'Essential Film List'. The film's costume designer was Mayes C. Rubeo.

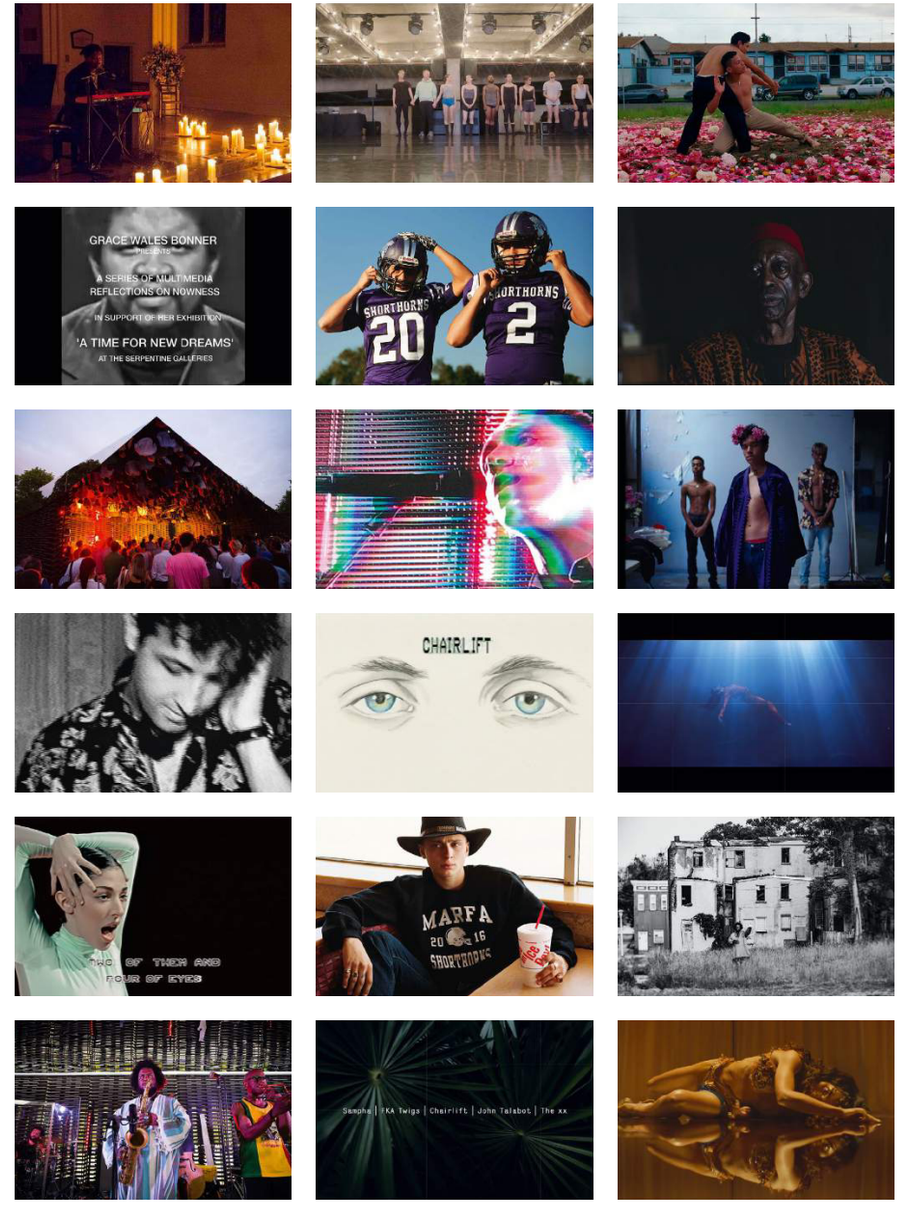
9. *Soft Criminal* was shown in September 2018 at Red Hook Labs in Brooklyn.

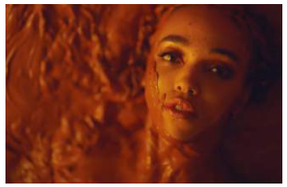
10. *Utopian Voices: Here and Now* ran July 6-August 29, 2016, at Somerset House in London.

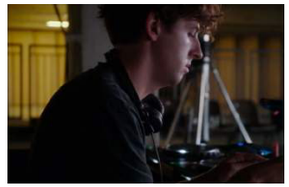
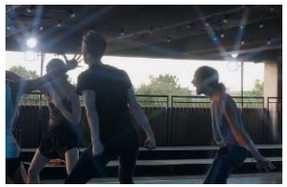
'I wanted to create this image about black women, and women of all races, being queens.
I will never know what it's like to be a woman, navigating these hostile times we live in.
I feel it's great to celebrate uncrowned queens.'

‘I am in the business of working with people who write the future.’

Young Turks is the record label that could teach luxury fashion groups a thing or two.





Young Turks, the term used to describe an insurgent group seeking radical change, is also the name of one of pop's most forward-thinking record labels. Launched in London in 2006, it was founded on the idea that the healthiest trajectory for a musician sits outside the standard (and, depending who you ask, stifling) model of studio, album, promo, tour, repeat. The label or collective – whatever you want to call it – is the brainchild of Caius Pawson, the publicity-shy impresario whose unique take on music management has fostered the careers of cult music artists including The xx, FKA twigs, Sampha and Kamasi Washington.

In 2019, music has never been more visual; fashion has never been more experiential. So, for a forensic look at the state of relations between fashion and music now, Pawson and his Young Turks seemed an ideal place to start. He's spent years encouraging his eclectic roster of artists to flex their muscles across the fields of film, art, fashion, design, choreography, and curation; although he's keen to add that the odd album or EP is nice, too. Think of the label as a pioneering (and infinitely nimbler) music-world counterpart to fashion's luxury conglomerates, where a variety of points of view under the same umbrella allows for a very special kind of cross-pollination.

In the following pages, Caius Pawson shares with *System* the history of Young Turks, before unveiling The xx's latest 'extra-curricular' project: a 10-year anniversary merch collection, designed in collaboration with Raf Simons; presented for these pages by Simons' own long-time image-making allies Willy Vanderperre and Olivier Rizzo; and the subject of a think-piece by legendary art director Peter Saville entitled 'What is merch?' Followed by a three-way conversation between electronic music artist Koreless, L-E-V choreographer Sharon Eyal, and Young Turks' in-house curator (yes, they have a curator on the payroll) Claude Adjil, exploring the strange and beautiful alchemy of cross-cultural collaboration, captured in a portfolio by Harley Weir. For those in fashion just waking up to the groundbreaking possibilities of kicking down the doors between disciplines, Young Turks is proof that it's no mere trend – it's the indisputable future.

Rana Toofanian

'I am interested in what people in fashion can teach musicians and vice versa. That's more exciting to me than just an artist wearing a designer's clothes.'

A conversation with Caius Pawson by Jorinde Croese

Let's talk a bit about your backstory. What do your parents do?
Caius Pawson: My mum works with visual artists, and my father is an architect. I grew up around a lot of that, but not involved in it. I didn't take to design, architecture or visual arts particularly fluently. The first thing that really struck me was music, and then I made my own way into that, but that wasn't until later. When I look back on it, I realize how much my parents' approach to what they do influenced my approach to what I do.

What was their approach?
My mother is very detail-oriented. She's obsessed with artists and protecting their integrity, as well as that of the work. Especially the context in which the art is received by the audience – from the placing of the work, and how the artist was being shown, either curatorially or where an art piece was, what it was next to and what the larger context was. The artist was always number one to her. She had a healthy disregard for the mechanisms of the industry around it. She was always pointing out the chasm between what the industry was trying to do and what was the artist's core thing. She was always very intent on ensuring that the artist's working practice was focused on making the best work and not just having to churn stuff out to feed endless art fairs. At the same time when the work was shown, it was shown with integrity. She was also my father's first client three times over. So his aesthetic grew with hers. She was very influential on that. She has always lived in his works as long as I have been alive, so I grew up in and around that work, and seeing how they both reacted to it. And then, you know, my dad is someone who will endlessly move one object around the table until the light hits it in the right way, and he will take 3,000 photos of the corner of a room or an edge or the way something touches. His obsession is the detail of his work; my mum's is other people's work being protected.

He was the artist and your mother…
He would never call himself an artist, but yes, exactly. She had a huge respect for the artists and I think I learned my respect for artists from her. I never really met the artists, though. My childhood was a *childhood*; I wasn't learning from artists. I was learning from my dad, but he wasn't pushing anything on me. I wasn't going to see Mies van der Rohe houses or Le Corbusier buildings; I was swimming and playing football. I went to a lot of classical concerts with my mother because my uncle was artistic director of the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and my mother had developed a real interest in classical music. I saw and heard a lot of that when I was younger, but it was rarely pushed on me. I think what they were doing was something quite radical, and to do something radical you have to break from tradition. So then, this idea that you push tradition onto your son just wasn't there. What happened for me was that I first heard pieces of music that changed me physiologically, where I could feel a chemical shift in me when I heard that music, like it triggered something hormonal. Before I did my first ecstasy and felt that serotonin rush, I heard bits of music as a pre-teen that did that to me. That probably happened five or six times when I heard a piece of music and walls broke down. I went to a school where a lot of your time was free time. I investigated making music, but it never came naturally to me. It took me 10 years to learn the guitar, and I still couldn't really play it. I remember the first time I met a serious musician at school, a guy called John Jackson, he would play and my spine would light up, neurons firing right up and down it. That was when I probably first thought I needed to be around artists. I started to organize concerts at school; there was a concert called JFP, which stood for Jazz, Folk and Poetry, but we changed it to Junk, Funk and Punk, and that allowed me to become a concert promoter. As soon as I left school, I started putting on parties, threw raves, club nights, gigs; it was like a natural continuation. There I discovered the wonders of nightlife. There were the huge highs of having hot shows that sold out, and making loads of money when you're an 18-year-old. It was very easy to have an idea, an ambition, and then manifest it in a one-month period. But then when it went wrong you lost all your money and it was a complete social humiliation on a scale I have never known since. Your idea either rides or dies. I loved the immediacy of the events, though,

'I heard bits of music as a pre-teen that changed me physiologically, where I could feel a chemical shift in me that triggered something hormonal.'

Caius Pawson at Young Turks' East London headquarters.
Portrait by Chris Rhodes.

Lighting technician: Terry Broadbent.

and the fact it brought all these people to me: artists, managers, labels, people on the scene. People just interested in culture and you were the epicentre of it for one night. Then once it was over, they were gone and you'd have no connections again. Then there was all that came with it: the gangs that own nightclubs, the dodgy council people we had to pay off, money getting stolen. We were doing club nights and raves and then the high of the club nights wore off. Clubs got a bit safe and I very much missed the free rave era. This was about 2005 by that point. We did a rave in an old Transport for London office block, and by this point we were using Myspace, sending out bulletins and telling people to come. But the police were trolling Myspace, so that was a really dim promotion. We weren't even really booking acts; great DJs were just rocking up wanting to play. We put on four floors of raves, one big bar, three rave rooms. We brought the sound system in the night before and we slept in the venue. It was grim. And then the next day the rave started, by 11pm it was rammed, and by midnight the riot police arrived. We had ice being delivered, but the police shut the road, so the ice was just being dumped by the side of the road. Kids were chucking ice at the police, people were peeing off the building onto the police. I thought my life was over, but that was when I met Richard Russell who owned XL, because he had come to DJ. He said to me: 'You should come and do this at my record label.' So I went to work for XL, which is a sort of classic independent record label that he founded in 1989. It was the epicentre of the rave and hardcore scene and went on to sign acts like SL2 and the Prodigy that topped the charts. And then XL had two or three major rebirths moving from a rave label to the best of each really incredible dance music scene to garage, and now it is an artist's-artist label with the likes of Radiohead and White Stripes, Dizzee Rascal and MIA, hundreds of acts. It was always about finding an artist who was ready to have something unique amplified. Artists who were completely themselves and didn't fit into any mould or genre, or maybe came from a scene but were genuinely themselves. Then XL helped amplify them in the most realistic way possible. It was a really beautiful place to go because it was all about backing the artists and their vision. When the industry tried to mess with that or tried to put limits on it, XL would back the artist. The Prodigy never did any TV, and at the time if you were an act of the Prodigy's size you had to do TV. XL was very good at having faith in the artist and so they got to work with all these incredible artists who all had their own unique identity. I had grown up loving labels like Motown and Warp where it was a very distinct sound in a very distinct time and place, and the way it was presented was beautiful. Record labels led by visionaries, and formed in their vision. XL wasn't that, but it was a place that understood artists and it was all about their vision. I went into XL as a promoter, so it went from being about picking the acts and picking my vision and having this relationship for one night, to suddenly being an A&R, which is when you find the acts. That's not about your vision, and it's not for one night – it's for 10 years.

Was that a natural transition for you?
I found it very difficult. You're not aware that you need to make these changes until you make them. It was all about my ego and my vision. If it worked or didn't work was all based on the quality of my idea, my work, and some circumstantial things. But when you work with an artist, you have to surrender quite a lot, because you are there to find someone you believe in and help them to get to the point where they can manifest their vision. You can help create an environment around them that gives them the best opportunity to do that, but you can't do it for them. It was no longer my ego that was going to make it work. In fact, my ego became a massive impediment because you have to listen and I wasn't very good at listening. I made some horrific mistakes and had some huge fallings out with artists early on as I was learning what I had to do to actually help them. The beauty of what we do, working with artists, is that not only is every artist different, but every stage of their career is different, and the people who are listening to the records also change.

When you started to run the record label, how many of the acts did you find yourself?
I don't think I signed anyone. I can tell you who showed me each act. Artists do the work in developing themselves; they are not consciously sitting there doing it, but it happens naturally because they are compelled to make the work for one reason or another. And they get to a certain point of capability where lots of people at once will come across them, if they have put themselves out there enough. It's like when an idea is thought and exists in a communal space, in the same way you might come across five people who make a scientific discovery at the same time. I don't really believe in discovering artists, artists do a certain amount of work that churns up into the atmosphere and they're going to be noticed. It's not the unearthing of a rare commodity; it's a 'do you connect with them?' But I'm not really interested in the work the artist has done – it's more about the future. And that has come from observing the decisions they make, observing their process and talking to them, being curious and finding out from what position they make their decisions. Is it a unified artistic thing? Is it all flowing from the same source? Or is it a bit more scattered and not really pulled together?

When you started Young Turks, did you need reference points in terms of mentors or a specific direction?
It was too intuitive. I started the record label and it was really badly run for the first couple of years. There was no rhyme or reason, no direction; I was just signing things without any clue. XL had these classic record sleeves that all the vinyl went in, so it was unified. Warp had this perfectly curated sound, and at the time, there were also Hyperdub and Kode9. I was in awe because every bit was artistically done, and it all tied together. Every label I loved would be like that, from the classic American hip-hop and old soul labels through to the European and British dance labels. Even how Decca or EMI did their classical stuff. I was in awe of that vision and foresight. I just started it too early ever to have had that much forethought; I was too young with no experience. I learned from the things around me and from Richard Russell and Mark Mills who ran Beggars Group, and Ben Beardsworth who ran XL. The way they found the right artist and then protected that artist's vision, so the artist could manifest their vision; that's been my biggest influence.

Young Turks has that unified vision now.
One hundred percent. It is very different to XL, though, because it came in this period where the artists were doing a lot of self-development. If you wanted to start a band, you had to learn your instruments, you had to find other people who wanted to be in a band, and had to agree on a shared vision, then rehearse and find some gigs, then find some studio time, record onto tape, record onto DAT, put it onto vinyl and get it into a store, or do enough gigs so that an A&R would see you and get you a record label. Then the record label would help you record an album, take you to radio, take you to press – and you would find your audience. And all those steps allowed for a really thorough development. Those artists had to make millions of artistic decisions to even get there. Every one of those decisions was like a deepening of their craft and was making them more profoundly interesting. Then the Internet and software turned up and you could just do a track overnight, put it online and reach an audience, and that whole development process dropped away. I learned the XL way, but I could never compete with them because they just did it better than me. I had to find acts that weren't ready for XL and develop them, give them the tools to develop themselves. And that is now the vision of Young Turks: helping artists find their own vision. It's the artist's own journey and we provide support along that journey.

What do you think made those other labels so successful?
If Def Jam had existed in Lebanon in 1972, it wouldn't have been the world's first proper hip-hop record label. It was so reliant on the moment, the time and the people around them. I couldn't have started a rave label that was culturally significant in 2006 because it happened in a different era. Environments and cultural ecosystems clear the way for artists to blossom, so it is no coincidence that post-punk, hip-hop, disco and some bits of house music came out from a 20-block radius in New York in the late 1970s and 1980s. There was something going on in the way that society was structured and all the different cultural institutions that allowed for this explosion of creativity. You either happened to be there and capture it, or you were intelligent enough to spot it and go towards it. All the things that have linked these great record labels – and I imagine art galleries and editors of magazines – is that they had the luck to be around a place that was completely vibrant with brilliant people and

'As soon as I left school, I started putting on parties, threw raves, club nights, gigs; it was a natural continuation. I discovered the wonders of nightlife.'

'My ego became a massive impediment because you have to listen and I wasn't very good at listening. I had some huge fallings out with artists early on.'

they had the ingenuity to spot it. Beyond that, they were better than anyone else because they had a vision of what they wanted. And they went against the tide that was pushing them. This record label wouldn't exist if we didn't live in London; it would be different, because we are reacting to our place. Now on the flip side of that, all of those record labels made the place that they were in better. They made it more likely that an artist would appear from that place. Warp collected the best of the electronic scene and helped inspire the next generation of electronic musicians, and Motown captured a moment in Detroit, while also putting Detroit on the map and helping the next generation of Detroit musicians come to the fore. I like that conversation between being there to capture something, but also doing on end; it was really powerful. We took the train up to Manchester that week and saw him play, and I offered him a deal. Before I got a job in A&R, I would speak to Kid Harpoon on the phone a lot, and I remember pacing very intently up and down the street where my dad lives, saying to him: 'If I ever get into A&R, we're going to go out and record just the rawest live show, the rawest representation of who you are. You've got it down – it's perfect. Then we are going to tour that album and build your foundation and then we're going to take the next step.' And he was like, 'Great, I'm onboard.' But then, as soon as I had the record label and the resources, I completely lost it. And I got every producer ever to come in and was like, 'We'll make three albums.' Two were terrible, one was OK, but it was nowhere near world's best songwriters. He had it, but I wasn't tuned into what it was about him that was special. You can't make things good with money and the decisions I was making were never going to be the right ones. It has to be the artist making their decisions, with you maybe bringing some good options for them to choose from, questioning their decisions or helping to reinforce their decision-making. It was very emotionally painful for everyone because it didn't work out with Kid Harpoon. I spent a lot of the label's money; it felt like a huge failure on my part, and I had an emotional collapse.

The next band I met was The xx and I was like, 'I am not going to rush this, no pressure on this doing well. I'm going to do this the opposite way; they can decide everything and I will just protect

'With The xx, we just found each other at the right time. No one was interested in signing them and I wasn't interested in pushing an album.'

something so special that you push the culture forward. That is what they did and the thing that links those people and labels is that they were all visionaries, and they could speak to artists and they were all willing to help make the artists' work as good as possible.

Did you decide to go for a more spacious method because of your experience of working with XL?

The truth is that on my first day at XL, Richard pulled me into the office and said, 'Alright now you're in A&R, who do you want to sign?' I had a friend called Kid Harpoon, and he was one of the best songwriters in London at the time. He was phenomenal live, charismatic beyond belief, and had wonderful guitar-playing and singing skills. I could have gone to his shows for years his potential. I was young. I didn't keep things simple; I didn't trust my instincts. We just spent all this money on stuff that wasn't highlighting what was brilliant about him. Stephen Street, who produced the Smiths records, agreed to do the Kid Harpoon album. It was sounding awful, and I sat him down and said: 'How come the Smiths records sound so good and mine sound so dreadful?' Which was probably actually massively insensitive of me. But he said, 'Look, I didn't make those records; the Smiths made them. I just captured them. As a producer, I'm only as good as the act I'm recording.' When Kid Harpoon and I parted ways, he handled it really well. He was probably in his mid to late 20s, and by the end of it I was probably in my early 20s. It was tough, but then he went off to become one of the what they want to do. I won't rush them. Instead of making an album, I'll pay for their rehearsal space for two years and they can just figure it out and do it by just being.' Everything was a reaction to how I had done it wrong previously. With The xx, we just found each other at the right time. No one was interested in signing them and I wasn't interested in pushing an album. We took it slowly, being real, playing gigs, listening to music, experimenting with stuff. Then eventually Jamie [from The xx] suggested that he produce the record and we did a very small deal to make sure it was financially without pressure, no one was hyped for them. Everything was the opposite, that was like ground zero and about understanding how to move forward. That was when I realized that this was how I wanted to run a record label.

Cinematography: Chayse Irvin.

Stills from Khalil Joseph's 37-minute film for Sampha's *Process* album, released through Apple Music, 2017.

It is hard to take that step back, because the world moves so fast. How do you know when to slow down?
I am so unbelievably privileged in the grander sense that I was born in a city like London, and in a smaller sense that I had parents who understood the value of working with artists. Not to mention in the more pertinent and precise sense that I was losing these guys loads of money and they stuck with me, no one ever rushed me or demanded that I make a big return on my investment. Everything just evolved the way it could. You just had to do a good job along the way. At any other company I would have been sacked; with any other mentor I wouldn't have learned those lessons and I would have been hurried into making more mistakes. I am eternally thankful for that. We have gone on to work with lots of other artists over the past 10 years. We're coming up to 10 years with Koreless and he is just about to release his debut album and it was well worth the wait. He has done beautiful artistic things in the meantime. If he wasn't such a radiant joy to be with, we probably wouldn't have carried on, but the space that I have allows us to give space to the artists. Sampha took seven years before the album. The xx was two and a half.

What do you do in the meantime?
You try to etch out a faint outline of what they want to create, and if they are not ready to do that right now, you try to find the pathways that allow them to develop the skills to do it. Sampha wrote and produced for a lot of people, and in doing this he learned from them about how to be an artist. It allowed him to fill his time with productive things that kept him patient, and as a human being he became ready to express what he wanted to express. It gave him an audience and it allowed his audience to be patient with him and it made him financially secure. So that is a very clear pathway. Sampha always wanted to be very true to his personal experience and his personal experience was very painful, so he didn't feel ready as a human being to make his artistic statement. The xx just didn't play instruments; they hadn't had a chance to rehearse. For them, it was more about the live experience and sending them on tour. Learning how to sing, learning how to perform, which still took them many years to master. Each artist is very different. FKA Twigs was very good at the visuals early on, very good at all the things that went around it, and in that period she learned to produce and to engineer; she mastered several different types of dance; she spent many years as a singer in a jazz bar. She developed all the technical things she needed as an artist, while waiting for the centre of gravity of her taste, and her ability to express unique things and intertwine the different influences in her life in such a unique way.

And you bring in ideas such as, 'Why don't you collaborate with Grace Wales Bonner, so that brings something to your world…'
Exactly, you tune into what you think they already want to do, and then you can suggest particular things. What tends to happen is that they will be talking about life, you engage them on a subject, and they'll say, 'Oh, my friend is making a film at the moment and I loved it, I would love to do the music for that.' So you say, 'Why not do it then?' You help empower decisions and things they want of which they don't think they're capable. That's when the best stuff happens. Just putting them in a world that will inspire them, making sure they are an active part of an artistic community, so they create the connections from which they can collaborate and express themselves. We put Grace Wales Bonner and Sampha together because I was lucky enough to meet Grace years ago, and we had lived together. Grace could help Sampha with visuals and Sampha could help Grace with realizing what she wanted to do with sound. The real beauty in that is bringing the two minds together and all the incidental things that they created. Romy from The xx went to Saint Martins to do a foundation course, for example, and a lot of those people ended up working with her along the way. We met just as she was leaving school and then she went to Saint Martins. Often the community the artist needs is right in front of them and it is just about empowering them to go for it, and then helping to nurture that community so they all succeed. That is the ideal. Some artists don't have that, so we have to suggest one, but it has always been for an artist to back themselves. I'm not here to work with an act just to make their next record better; I am here to work with acts for their entire careers. I don't want one-hit wonders or a flash in the pan. I want the acts to last, and for them to do that, they have to develop themselves. And collaboration is one thing, but you still need to drive it home. The idea is one thing but the execution is completely another. Someone had the idea to get Jamie xx to remix Gil-Scott Heron's album. That's a good idea, but Jamie then had to go and make the great album.

'Grace Wales Bonner could help Sampha with visuals and Sampha could help Grace with sound. The real beauty is the incidental things they created.'

What are the important factors for an artist's longevity?
You have to create a life and an environment around yourself that allows you to be the truest version of yourself – and the artists, whatever they do, who I have found doing their best work completely follow their bliss, from who they have lunch with to where they go on holiday to how their house looks, to the distribution model by which their work goes out. It is all dictated by them following what they enjoy, who they are, and what they love. When they get distracted by industry pressures or money, that is when they start second guessing themselves. To do that, though, you have to create an environment that allows them to make those decisions. If you are surrounded by people who are forcing you to make commercial decisions 24/7, you will make commercial work. If you are doing things on a personal level for any reason other than the thing that you are trying to create and the joy it brings, you will probably lose sight of what's important quite quickly. And that often means having complete control. Not being a control freak, though, because they tend to want control of things that don't matter. But if you can have sovereignty over the things that are important, then you can start to make a series of really good decisions, and make work that you want and that will allow you to stay in tune with yourself. That is what I would say, and now a part of that is creating the financial freedom to do that, which comes from two things: making enough money and not needing that money. Some of them get distracted, but then we all get distracted; it's a natural thing to do. Only the very best can stay focused on what it is they want, even if it is unpalatable to other people.

You spoke about the growth of your artists, but what about you? Do you have a vision in mind for yourself?
That's a very interesting question. [Long pause.] I want to get this right. The key thing I want to be able to do is to keep adapting. If I were an artist, I suppose my dream state would be always to be able to make work, to continue to create work. And if you're able to continue that, then you're getting it right. I would like to be able to continue to work on an artist's behalf, and with the world changing as rapidly as it does, that requires a lot of growth. So I want to be better at understanding what our artists need as they change. And I want to improve how we help our artists to communicate with the world. More than ever, you need to be creating things that are ancillary to the work itself, to create a world in which the work is presented. I want to be able to make films, publish books, and put together different types of performance from music to dance, to help our artists communicate what they want to communicate. I am in the business of working with people who write the future. I do wonder if we're not heading more into a free-form state, into a moment of cultural improvisation, as opposed to grand schemes. Where artists who can just live in and respond to the moment will be able to communicate their thoughts much more successfully than those with grander visions who slowly think about what they want to do. Even if my gut feeling is that both have existed, and both will continue to exist. The more people doing things spontaneously, the more important it will feel when someone gets together with a well-thought-out, slowly created masterpiece.

'More than ever, you need to be creating all sorts of things that are ancillary to the work itself, to create a world in which the work is presented.'

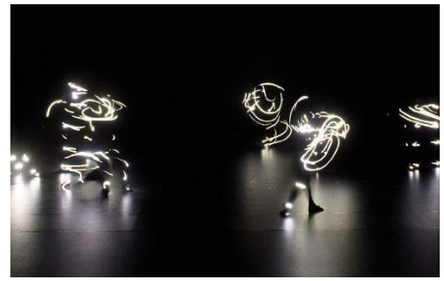
What are your thoughts on how the music industry itself is changing?
One thing I'm excited about is that domestic and local music is on the rise worldwide. People are listening more to music that people around them are making. That's an exciting celebration of local cultures, and although some things will become homogenized and sound similar, how things are made and the detail behind them speak very locally. Even in London, a lot of the most exciting music that's coming out emerges from extremely local scenes speaking to themselves. Take something like drill. The language is very closed in on itself; it's almost like a code and what they're talking about is very micro happenings within their world. I think a lot of people, myself included, thought the Internet was going to completely globalize everything. Now you know that they're using beats that were made in Chicago that they've taken and made their own, but it's completely different to what's happening in other parts

of the world with hip-hop culture. Yes, the Internet has connected us all, and at first it might have destroyed the boundaries between genres, but now I think we have a chance for culture to become a little more local again.

We haven't talked about fashion yet. Fashion... When we look for pathways for an artist's development, they need to be able to bring opportunities in which to experiment and to express themselves, but quite often there's a limit to how much a musician can do with other musicians. Over the years we've realized that what we want to do is bring brilliant minds together to affect both in their separate disciplines. Sampha made the *Process* film with Kahlil Joseph. It is a beautiful film and Kahlil helped Sampha express something that he couldn't express in the album. But beyond that, the two of them, how they observed each other's work, and how they observed each other's philosophy, massively helped them grow. So, you go to other brilliant people wherever you can find them and you learn from them. Fashion has always looked to music and vice versa. The story of popular music is tied up with social movements, and social movements are defined by their fashions and their music. The two just live interlinked. You get someone like Raf Simons working with The xx and Raf is clearly a brilliant mind of his generation; there's a very strong thread running through everything he does. You can learn from collaborating with him. As much as I am inspired by the way that fashion can pull from lots of different art forms, and how it is constantly recreating itself, I am more interested in the people in it, and what they can teach musicians and vice versa. What they get from that discussion is more exciting to me than just an artist wearing a designer's clothes.

Fashion seems to have become a patron of the arts in the way that the Church was in medieval times, when it financed the greatest artists. Now it is fashion brands with the money and desire to work with and 'own' cultural leaders. Much of what we feed the audience from an industry point of view is visual, and so much of that visual is fashion. Fashion brands have a hold. In a certain way, they are like the gatekeepers of – for want of a better word – 'cool'. So when much of an artist's output is visual and fashion brands have such a stranglehold over the visual, fashion has this huge sway over music. Yet the actual music being made is not really being exploited by the fashion industry. The fashion industry has always supported interesting people and musicians in an interesting way, from Marc Jacobs bringing Sonic Youth onto the runway through to Raf's love of The xx through to Hedi Slimane's love of music. Fashion can be a huge supporter of music, and it has often ringfenced people who it thinks have a strong visual identity, and in that way, it has been an incredible patron. Music is a beautifully democratic format: you make your money by the most amount of people paying the same amount of money for your thing. If you want a number-one hit, you need everybody, and everyone counts as one; unlike fashion, which is about building a myth and then selling it to a few rich people. In that sense, fashion's ability to have a stranglehold over what music does through money is not a great force. But the way that fashion dictates, the way that musicians look and therefore present themselves and therefore think, is extremely powerful. And despite it being a couple of old French men owning most of this global fashion, there are thousands of artists referencing these brands as if they have just discovered them. It is not direct patronage, but more through its influence. Every single popular music artist who displays their image is doing a massive part of it through what they are wearing, and the more counterculture you go, the more connected to fashion it becomes. Every social movement that had a musical movement created fashion. They all feed into each other, the high and the low. In the same way that a young designer is ripped off by a bigger designer and a bigger designer is ripped off by a high-street chain, but then it comes back round, and that little designer was actually using a vintage piece from that chain – the whole thing is cyclical. The way music and fashion correspond is completely the same. Like how Odd Future came out with their unique mentality that rejected everything that had come before, while also respecting it all – and that was distilled in what they were wearing. Before kids understood the jazz that was behind Tyler's music, they felt the punk through what he was wearing. Ultimately, fashion has had this huge knock-on effect on what kids are doing societally and musically – the two are so completely intertwined.

'Every social movement that had a musical movement created a fashion movement. They all feed into each other, the high and the low.'



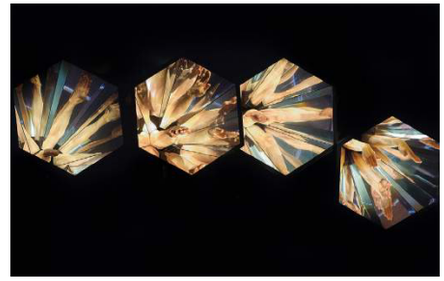


Photo: Joel Chester Fildes.

Tree of Codes ballet, choreographed by Wayne McGregor, designed by Olafur Eliasson, with a musical score by Jamie xx, premiered at the Manchester International Festival, 2015.

The xx × Raf Simons

A collaborative collection to mark the 10th anniversary of the band's debut album.

Photographs by Willy Vanderperre
Styling by Olivier Rizzo
And a conversation with Peter Saville

‘We met Raf for the first time in 2014 when he invited us to play at the Guggenheim in New York for Dior. Obviously, it was the most incredible invitation to receive. We had a fun time and went out after the show when we had a chance to talk to each other. We felt an immediate connection. I thought that he was a very emotionally intelligent person and I really enjoyed talking to him. I felt really close to him from the beginning.

I was introduced to Raf’s work through the collaborations he had done with other musicians. How he wove bands’ work into his work really excited me. I hadn’t seen that so much: it felt like an homage to merch, while being something completely new and different. We then worked with him in 2017 on a collaboration for our music video ‘I Dare You’, which was shot by Alasdair McLellan. It was hugely exciting to find out that Raf, who then was at Calvin Klein, was interested in creatively directing it for us, to complete the series that we had already started with Alasdair. It was a no brainer to say yes. He had such an in-depth, thoughtful, considerate, and meaningful intent. I love that about him: nothing is flippant, everything comes really from a thought-out and cared-about place.

The concept of the DIY aspect in the 10th anniversary merch collection, using patches and pinning them on yourself, is something that feels very teenage to me. This links nicely in with the first album – we were teenagers when we wrote the songs, and I was definitely doing that kind of thing with what I was wearing. I got in trouble at school because I was cutting up my uniform. My dad once got a voicemail from school saying: ‘She looked like she was going to a rock concert’, which he thought was hilarious. I love that Raf wanted to combine those ideas from his collection into our collaboration.’

Romy Madley Croft, The xx

‘The album *xx* represents a very distinct sensibility linked to youth culture at that time. It succeeds in articulating and putting into words what is going on in the minds of kids when they’re dealing with love, heartbreak, friendships. And not in a stereotypical way, it seemed to be more real in a way. More authentic.

Working with the guys has been so amazing and so easy at the same time. We have worked together before, of course, and I just think we are already quite attuned to each other in the sense that we know very well what we want and what we can offer each other.

When they reached out to do something together to celebrate the 10th anniversary of *xx*, I didn’t have to think twice. I have been a fan of theirs from the very beginning, and I’m so happy and grateful for the fact that we became friends and got to collaborate in so many ways.’

Raf Simons

Models: Luca at Hakim, David at Unit, Maoro at Rebel, Ilona at Girl, Daan and Heloise at Rebel, Esra, Felix, Sean, Laszlo, Ruben, Marius and Rune, all at Mindbox Casting.
Lighting technician: Romain Dubus. Digital operator: Henri Coutant. Make-up artist: Lynsey Alexander. Manicurist: Eva Peeters. Hair stylist: Anthony Turner. Styling assistants: Niccolo Torelli, Louise Pollet.
Photography assistant: Samir Dari. Production: Lieze Rubbrecht, Isabelle Verreyke at Mindbox. Dieter Blonde. Make-up assistant: Phoebe Brown. Hair assistant: Claire Grech.

'What is merch?'

A conversation with Peter Saville by Jonathan Wingfield

To explore the 10th anniversary collection by The xx and Raf Simons, and to examine the broader question of merchandise – or merch, to give it its current label – where would you like to start?

Peter Saville: I think we need to start by considering previous patterns of behaviour. Because the pertinent question to ask is, 'How did we get here?' The starting point for the journey being the emergence of pop culture, with music as the predominant catalyst for sociocultural awareness and change in postwar societies. In effect, the emergence of youth culture. We know that young people were not a significantly commercial part of society until the 1950s, when they became a market and as a consequence, consumer products began to be aimed specifically at them, often to the exclusion of their parents.

Merch is a term we associate with music culture; the consequence of 'love the music, buy the T-shirt'. Elvis arguably signals the beginning – Colonel Parker produced endless merch. He saw the youth market. He understood that you have a captive audience that desires *anything* associated with their beloved artist. What we are seeing today is the *evolution* of merch alongside the evolution of the youth market. The Raf Simons and The xx collection is a clear example of the emerging hybridity between disciplines, in what we can refer to as the landscape of 'The Big Flat Now' – an expression that Jack Self and Joerg Koch insightfully coined in a recent issue of *032c* magazine. A few years ago I referred to the condition as 'The Disco Ball of Everything', but The Big Flat Now is a *really* good description, and the Raf Simons and The xx collab is absolutely representative of it. Is it fashion? Is it music? Is it art? Well, it's the product of The Big Flat Now, because it's all those things; it's the new hybridity.

Obviously music has always been relatively easy to navigate for the consumer. People just know whether they like something or not. So, they support the music they like. They don't sign up to music that they don't like. Now though, with the blurring of music and fashion and art, it is far more difficult to navigate, and far more esoteric. Young people – even not-so-young people – don't *really* know if they actually like what is being presented. In fact, they are likely to feel entirely adrift. So, to help people, what have inadvertently emerged as default 'guides' are brands. Raf is a brand as Dior is a brand as Damien Hirst is a brand. The xx is a brand. They're all brands. *I'm* a brand! And we've been made into brands by audiences identifying with us as a kind of avatar to navigate The Big Flat Now.

What is it about these specific brands, these avatars, that makes them beacons of quality?

They are beacons of *affiliation*, because what might be quality to one person might not be to someone else. They are beacons with which you choose to affiliate yourself. If you like Raf Simons then you will follow what he does – maybe your friends are into something that has attracted you to Raf Simons. In truth, though, you don't really even have an opinion, but you identify with Raf Simons so you follow the brand, and sometimes buy it. So, with any new Raf Simons collection, you want to like those clothes, just like you seek out someone's new album – because you like that brand. But if those same clothes had a different label on them, you might have passed them by. People use these beacons of affiliation because it is oversaturated out there. Music was fucking easy compared to how it is now. It must be a nightmare being 16 now because it is *all* there for you. Where do you start?

What leads you to believe that people don't really have an opinion?

I just think people aren't always able to use their own judgement to understand *why* they like something. You can see that quite plainly if you walk through busy shopping neighbourhoods all over the world. There are hordes of people, queuing outside certain stores, wearing certain brands… and the only thing that has brokered that relationship is the brand identity. If you took all the labels out and put the products in plain cardboard boxes in a warehouse, and let people in, then they'd have to think, 'Well, what *do* I really like here?' And I think they may be at a loss.

Interestingly, what I feel about the power brokers in the marketplace – such as Kering and LVMH – is that they have not entirely orchestrated this desire; I see them as having caught the wave. They own these brands towards which audiences have gravitated, and because of their power they can exploit the conundrum to the extent that almost everything you're buying becomes a piece of merch.

When did fashion become part of pop culture? And when did pop culture become fashionable?

In those terms, post Internet and social media. Instagram has played a very big part in it. When you followed a band pre-Internet and you wore the T-shirt, you would see other people around locally wearing 'your' T-shirt. Today, social media joins up all those fans worldwide into new social groups. Everyone is sharing their affiliations globally. Social media made cults global. The crucible of this was between 2005 and 2015. You can see pathways such as Kanye, the Kardashians, Adidas, Nike, Off-White, Louis Vuitton, Frieze Art Fair, Raf Simons, The xx… but I wouldn't risk pointing at any particular person or event or moment because I think that it is a global phenomenon.

There's a dichotomy at play here, because on one hand we recognize the democratization of cults, or just culture. But on the other hand, the idea of limited editions, of limited availability, is applied to almost everything.

The limited-edition collab feels to me like entry-level collecting. We can't all be the elite, buying a rare Basquiat for $100 million, but some can buy one-off Nikes by Virgil Abloh. We can enter that privileged echelon of collectors by having one of an 'edition'. And then of course, we see the secondary market online afterwards, which is no different to the secondary art market. It's the recent phenomenon of, 'I queued up outside Supreme, I bought one of an edition of 500 for $500, and then flipped it for two and half grand the following day.' This is art-market practice across other levels of society. It's also connoisseurship; they are connoisseurs – of trainers. Sotheby's now hosts sneaker auctions. It is all part of sociocultural evolution, but we are seeing it at multiple levels. Limited-edition sneakers or T-shirts are highly aspirational acquisitions for some. They are making a selective and rare acquisition, which is the same as buying a Donald Judd or a Chippendale chair. I mean, why not? It's easy to be snobbish about it, but that is missing the point. These are precious artefacts to their respective audiences.

Some of the T-shirts in the The xx and Raf Simons collection include elements of customization. They're encouraging…

…interaction. It is curatorial. It is engagement work, so it has that interactive quality that we have seen manifest through art practice. It's also encouraging styling, because everyone is a stylist: 'This is my acquisition and this is how I am showing it.' This is part of the aspirational evolution of the individual; we are all connoisseurs now; we are all stylists. Everybody wants to be on the inside. That's what is driving it: you are on the outside and you want to be on the inside; that is why people want to go to fashion shows. Shows that once had 200 people in the audience, now have 200,000 people watching the livestream – making everyone an insider.

Legacy, proof, documentation, *témoignage*, are key to this insider condition. When people now attend gigs or fashion shows, they all become mediocre cameras operators, preoccupied by the act of proving they were there, and then sharing that documentation with their own networks and the wider digital world. The merch is the physical extension of that.

Exactly. I recently went to see my friend [physicist and TV presenter] Brian Cox 'play' the O2, and the audience was wearing Brian Cox T-shirts. I have never seen any David Attenborough merch! But there is Brian Cox merch, because they are a generation who identify with their avatar. They have been part of the spectacle and they bought the T-shirt. I mean – the pop merchandising of science!

Do you think any of this can be defined as challenging the system, pushing things forward, pushing barriers? Do you think it is a healthy thing?

Unfortunately, it is now all so grossly commercialized. I think the greatest concern is that when I was young it felt as if there was a social safety net, and that no longer exists. A few years ago, a survey determined that happiness peaked in the UK in 1978. I am from a relatively secure, middle-class background, and that gave me the courage to take chances. But my concern is that there is no safety net now. Social welfare, that feeling that if you fell, something would catch you – that has gone, which must surely restrict risk taking. It's usually the young who have nothing to lose who branch out in new directions, but these days, if they make a

'Merch is associated with music culture; it's all about 'love the music, buy the T-shirt'. Elvis signals the beginning – Colonel Parker produced endless merch.'

'We use brands as beacons of affiliation in our oversaturated world. It must be a nightmare being 16 because it's *all* there for you. Where do you start?'

connection, they have to monetize it fast before it is gone. And the quicker they commercialize it, the quicker it goes. I used to call it Spice Girl culture, but that seems vintage now.

What's the modern equivalent?
Virgil's trajectory is a recent example of it. He might have been saying to himself, 'If I put this one opportunity off until next year, will it still be there?' This is a high-speed culture that we're in and finding a way to survive in the form of a career is the challenge for the individual now. How do you dip in, do something, drop out and circle back again? Can you do that? Or do you just have to make so much right here right now that it doesn't matter if it doesn't happen again? And where there used to be a dozen competitors, there are now a multitude; I mean, how many aspirant stylists are there out there? How many photographers, art directors, designers, journalists, writers, bloggers?

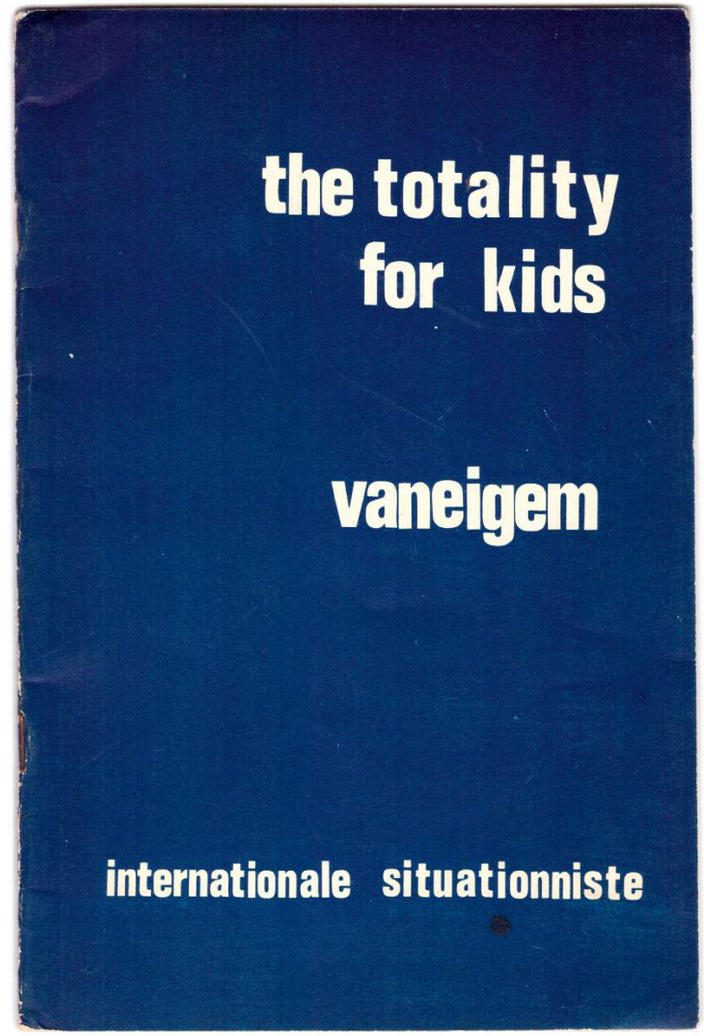
When did fashion become cool to the world of music?
This is purely evolutionary history. From my personal point of view, the blueprint is definitely in the early 1970s. When I see reportage of gigs from the 1960s, there are these esoteric rock stars on stage, while the audiences are still wearing everyday sweaters and jackets. What then happens in the 1970s, with David Bowie and Roxy Music, is that image becomes intrinsic to the whole. The presentation itself becomes a total work, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Roxy Music and David Bowie, for example, are total works. Kraftwerk was a total work. They don't just play music, the entire expression is a total work.

Is that what you felt at the time?
I remember distinctly seeing that with David Bowie. It wasn't enough to just like the music; you felt invited to adopt the look as well. For me personally, it was with Roxy Music and specifically with Bryan. You would go to a Roxy gig and there would be a sea of Bryan Ferry lookalikes. That would have happened a little with Dylan and the Beatles a decade earlier, but not so comprehensively. Basically, self-image became democratized, with David Bowie as perhaps the most significant catalyst. By the time we got to the 1990s, it was just normal. I could walk around Soho in the 1990s and see that the manipulation of identity had become standard practice. You know, you would no longer see a quirky guy and think, 'Oh, that's a quirky guy'; you would think, 'Ah, he's taken his cues from Jarvis and he is *working* that look.' It started in the 1990s and by around the millennium, it had become the new standard; basically, compared to the 1970s, *everybody* got cool. We're all cool now, so it becomes a little meaningless.

It's McCool.
It is. And that's a natural sociocultural evolution.

When does this acceleration of cool cease to accelerate?
I honestly don't know. I don't think it has a conclusion, which brings to mind a Situationist text I have by Raoul Vaneigem – called *The Totality for Kids*.

That would look great on a T-shirt.
It will.



Raoul Vaneigem, *The Totality for Kids*, first English-language edition, published by Christopher Gray (1966).

Young Turks × L-E-V

Choreographer Sharon Eyal brought the dancers; Koreless and Jamie xx supplied the soundtrack.

By Claude Adjil
Photographs by Harley Weir

'You started the music and then I just began improvising movements.'

A conversation with L-E-V's Sharon Eyal and Lewis Roberts aka Koreless by Claude Adjil

Choreographer Sharon Eyal started her career with the Batsheva Dance Company in 1990 as a dancer, later becoming its associate artistic director and house choreographer. In 2013, she launched her own company L-E-V (Hebrew for 'heart') with her long-time collaborator Gai Behar. At the core of Sharon's work is a robotic energy, wild sensuality, and a contagious sense of delirium that feels as if it could spread like a virus. Unlike Eyal, Gai Behar did not train as a classical ballet dancer, but worked in Tel Aviv's music and night club scene and it's this shared passion and love for music, dance and rave culture that binds Young Turks and L-E-V.

Caius Pawson first visited Sharon and Gai in the summer of 2017 and immediately fell in love with their work and them. The Young Turks team and artists have since spent time watching and meeting L-E-V and dreamed of what they could do together, and how they could break down the structures of dance and bring dancers and audiences closer together.

The first results were staged this summer when L-E-V took over a car park at Bold Tendencies in Peckham and London audiences were able to experience works from its existing repertoire with new performances from Jamie xx and Koreless. Young Turks curator and producer Claude Adjil sat down with Lewis Roberts, the mind behind Koreless, and Sharon Eyal this September, following the premiere of her new work *Love Chapter 3* at Ruhrtriennale, and asked the two artists to reflect on the magic that was created in London and share some insight into their processes.

Claude Adjil: How did this project begin? When did you first encounter each other's work?

Lewis Roberts: I first saw Sharon about a year before we met, actually. I saw L-E-V at Sadler's Wells. I went having not seen any dance before; I knew nothing about dance.

Sharon Eyal: That's the best.

Lewis: There was no taking it apart. It was so exciting for me to see this thing that I didn't understand. I was really excited because it was exactly what I was trying to do, just from a different point of view. It then fed back into my music, the movement and the bodies, particularly with the vocals.

Claude: When you first saw L-E-V's work you were in the midst of finishing your upcoming album.

Lewis: I was finishing the album and that show definitely helped it find a final form.

Sharon: When I met you, I'd been working in Rambert and you came and brought your music. Everything was very spontaneous. I can feel when something has happened and when it hasn't. You started the music and I started improvising; it was amazing for me. It was so rich and I enjoyed it so much. This was the first time I had met you and your music. When we started to work together, it felt so organic. Your music is very physical and that physicality makes me immediately feel connected. I felt like the languages were the same; it was easy and beautiful.

Lewis: Like parallel, just different.

Claude: When you knew you were going to do the project of the residency in London you spoke to Sharon, watched some videos, and went off to the studio to make some music. When you got to rehearsals, you didn't end up using any of the music that you'd planned to use.

Lewis: I initially wrote a load of music for the dance, almost like underscore stuff that tried to match the mood exactly, and I didn't think it worked. It was very composed and imitative of the dance. But what we ended up working with was...

Sharon: What you loved the most. It's important that it's what you like and that you weren't thinking about the dance. It is not important to do something for the dance. If you do something that you like, it will fit.

Lewis: Totally and that distance is important anyway. When it is not quite fitting together, but then something else grows out of it.

Sharon: Exactly, and then some moments can be more together.

Lewis: Totally, those occasional moments where the two do sync together, like when Alice breaks off, that's very satisfying.

Sharon: That's the beauty, a moment like that.

Claude: You always say, Sharon, that you are working through the piece. You were rehearsing for a few days, but nothing is ever final, so it's all always being constantly reworked. The whole structure of you calling out to the dancers and also talking directly to Lewis and giving direction and instructions. What was very special about the piece and our collaboration was how it was presented as this open-ended, experimental process. The audience was watching and seeing it as it was being made, witnessing the process. Sharon, you're very intuitive, both emotionally and physically, your senses are heightened and aware, and your practice is also about what you feel and how you work through your feelings.

Sharon: I love to change it; I love to work because it is live art, to change, to add and to reduce. It always has to change, it is not like a picture on the wall, and we have the option to grow in it.

Lewis: You have to water it.

Sharon: Exactly, and we are changing every second.

Claude: And for you, Lewis, obviously your process is usually in the studio where you have more control over the production of your music. The dialogue inherent in your process meant you also had to open up.

Lewis: It's the same, the first moments are very improvised, feeling around in the dark for something, then you when you come across something, it's about chopping down and reducing it and trying to get to the bottom of it. It's always tempting to add stuff and make things bigger and more, but to take away and find out what's really underneath and then presenting that as something complete, that's what I love about your work. It is very restrained, like tiny movements or a very distilled and small idea.

Sharon: I think less is more.

Claude: You've always said that when you and Gai started the company, Gai hated traditional dance; he had a background throwing raves in Tel Aviv

Sharon: He wasn't connected, he'd never seen dance before.

Claude: It's similar to what Lewis was saying, the first time he encountered dance was with your piece because dance had never felt like a medium or a discipline that was inviting or interesting. Have you always been interested in the idea of bringing dance to different worlds?

Sharon: Dance can be freer, simpler. I don't want to call it casual because it is really not casual, but I think it can have the 'eye-feeling', that you can look into the eye of something. It's not something you need to understand – it's something you need to feel.

Claude: It is all about emotion, intention and energy.

Sharon: And the direction, how you approach it, how you present it. And I think it is all about that, but it is not, 'Now we are going to see something philosophical.'

Claude: There is no thesis to it.

Sharon: No, there is. It is not that we don't want to do a story and then in the end we do. It's just that the source and the goal of it comes from the heart and something you really love to do. That is why people can connect to it; it is simple.

Claude: Music, obviously, is a great way of bringing that out. Everyone says music is sort of the opener for those emotions. You are bringing in different influences and spending time with them in rehearsals. You are always interested in this wide range of different sounds always open to them.

Sharon: I want to be inspired, and so there is no one style. I'm open; if something touches me then it is working. And if not, I can't do anything with it. It is like everything in life – relationships, love – you either feel it or you don't. It was really beautiful from the first moment when I improvised to your music. It was amazing.

Claude: What was that like for you to see that, Lewis?

Lewis: It was different, but it was also really nice to see the similarities in the way you're working – it wasn't on a computer, but it was the same. It was editing, cutting, copying, pasting but in real time. It was really the same.

Claude: Do you think you were influenced by the location and setting in London, not a theatre, but a car park. How did this kind of architecture influence what you made? Throughout our collaboration and dialogue, we always have been trying to figure out these different spaces, we keep trying to break down these barriers. It changed over the course of the event, on different evenings the audience was standing or was seated, but there was always a sort of intimacy and closeness. Were you affected by the fact that you could hear the train and feel the rain or the wind? Do you want to continue to work in these types of spaces?

Sharon: I love it, and because I'd never done it before, it was a learning process. All those distractions gave me inspiration as did feeling people close and intimate; then there was me telling the dancers what to do via a microphone in the moment. I could be a bit rougher, a bit more chaotic, and I loved

'In the studio I'm trying to forget about my body. But after being with the dancers I was thinking about how my hands were moving all the time.'

'I don't want to call dance casual because it really isn't, but neither is it something you need to understand – it's something you need to feel.'

that. It fitted what we are doing, so I would love to continue researching in this way. It was something magical, the train, the rain, the people, the sunset, the cold, the warm, the 'no toilet'. It all gave me another aspect for the piece – freedom. The piece is so precise, but in *Love Chapter 3* something changes in the spirit, the freedom can be even higher when the system is really closed. That is something that I'm looking for, more freedom in a closed, hard structure.

Lewis: Because if something is totally improvised, there is almost no way to transgress. There's no danger there; you know there are no limits before you begin. If you're working in a closed system with fixed rules and then something breaks out of that, then it's much more devastating.

Sharon: In the first part of the piece, the group is moving and I build structure and it was one day before the performance and it was a bit tense because we just had one more day and then they told me, 'Wow, it is so good to know where we're going because then we can be free.'

Claude: How does it work with the dancers? It was great that everyone was in the space working and that Lewis had the chance to see how the dancers were responding and Sharon was choreographing and watching them and seeing them react to the music. Sharon, you told me previously that you don't count but the dancers do. What you were doing was from the existing repertoire, but you were remaking it and it was incredible to see how the physical memory of the dancers' bodies meant they knew the pieces, but they were also responding to Lewis's music, which you also played in certain rehearsals.

Sharon: I think they are sensitive and genius. It is almost telepathic.

Claude: And Lewis embraced this world and even joined the dance classes.

Lewis: When I'm in the studio I'm actively trying to forget about my body. The place is kitted out like a cinema or something with no windows, but after that week with the dancers I was even thinking about how I was clicking the mouse and thinking about how my hands were moving all the time.

Claude: Then you were suddenly on stage. We didn't expect that when we started this project; Sharon was the choreographer with the dancers and Lewis would provide the music, but then Lewis was also on stage!

Sharon: The beauty is that we don't know so much; we are learning. It was new for all of us.

Claude: That's what is so exciting about the collaboration and the ongoing project – it's about trust and belief on both sides. Both processes are like a desire to learn from one another. We're now working on this new commission for 2021 and that freedom and that trust is enabling everyone to grow and learn. We have to go through this process together, then figure out what shape and structure we want to create. And if we didn't do these residencies or performances, we wouldn't be able to come to this final piece.

‘I can be transformed by putting this thing on my head.’

How has master milliner Stephen Jones managed to work with so many different people over extended periods of time, quite often simultaneously?

By Tim Blanks
Photographs by Juergen Teller

N'S
conjunction with normal tea,
like Earl Grey which is vile.
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BUILDERS BUILDERS BUILDERS
ROSY LEA ROSY LEA ROSY LEA ROSY LEA
WET 'N' WARM WET 'N' WARM WET 'N' WARM WET 'N' WARM
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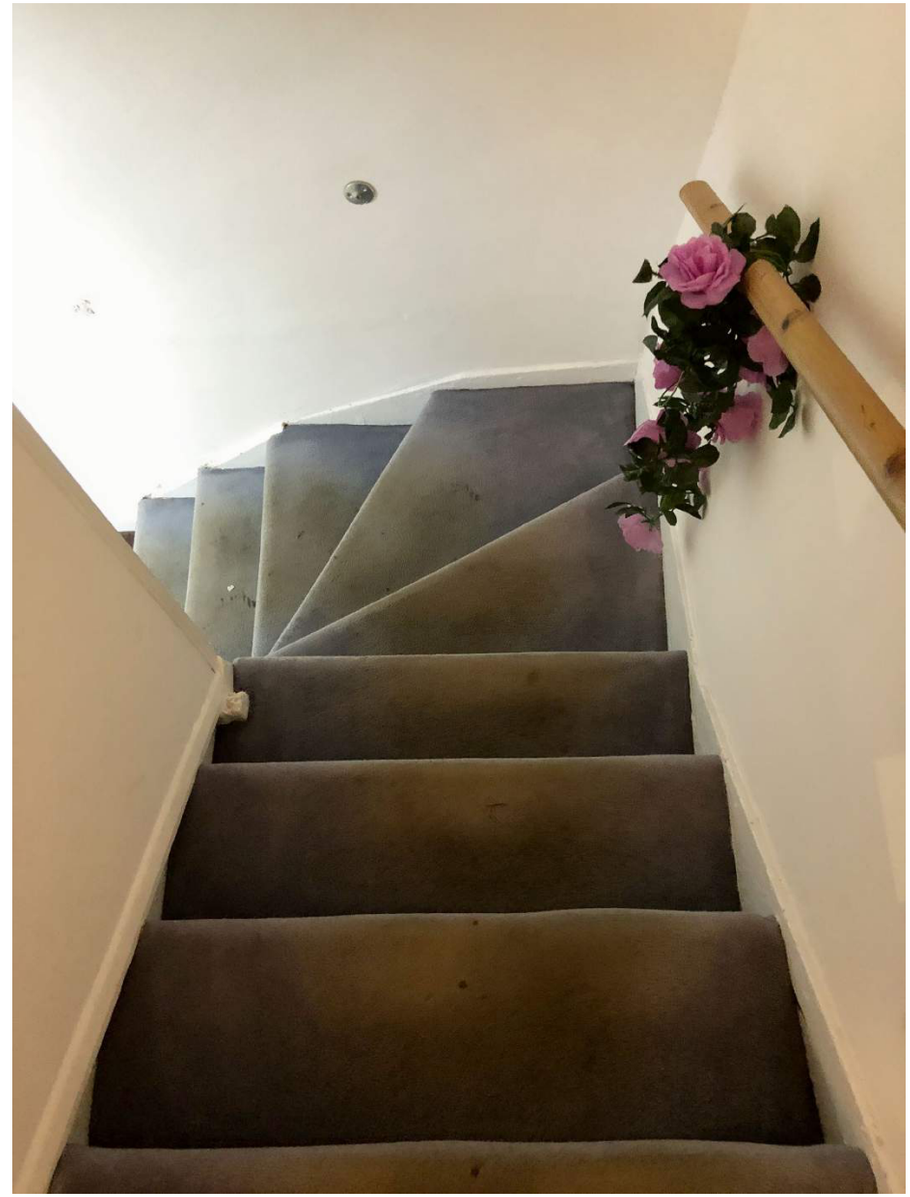
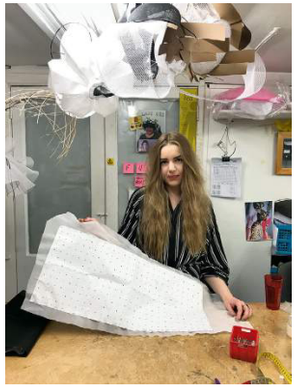


Rafa Peinador
Trimmer

Veronique Thomson
Head of trimming workroom

Emily Keynes
Model milliner

Julia Wigley
Head of the model millinery workroom



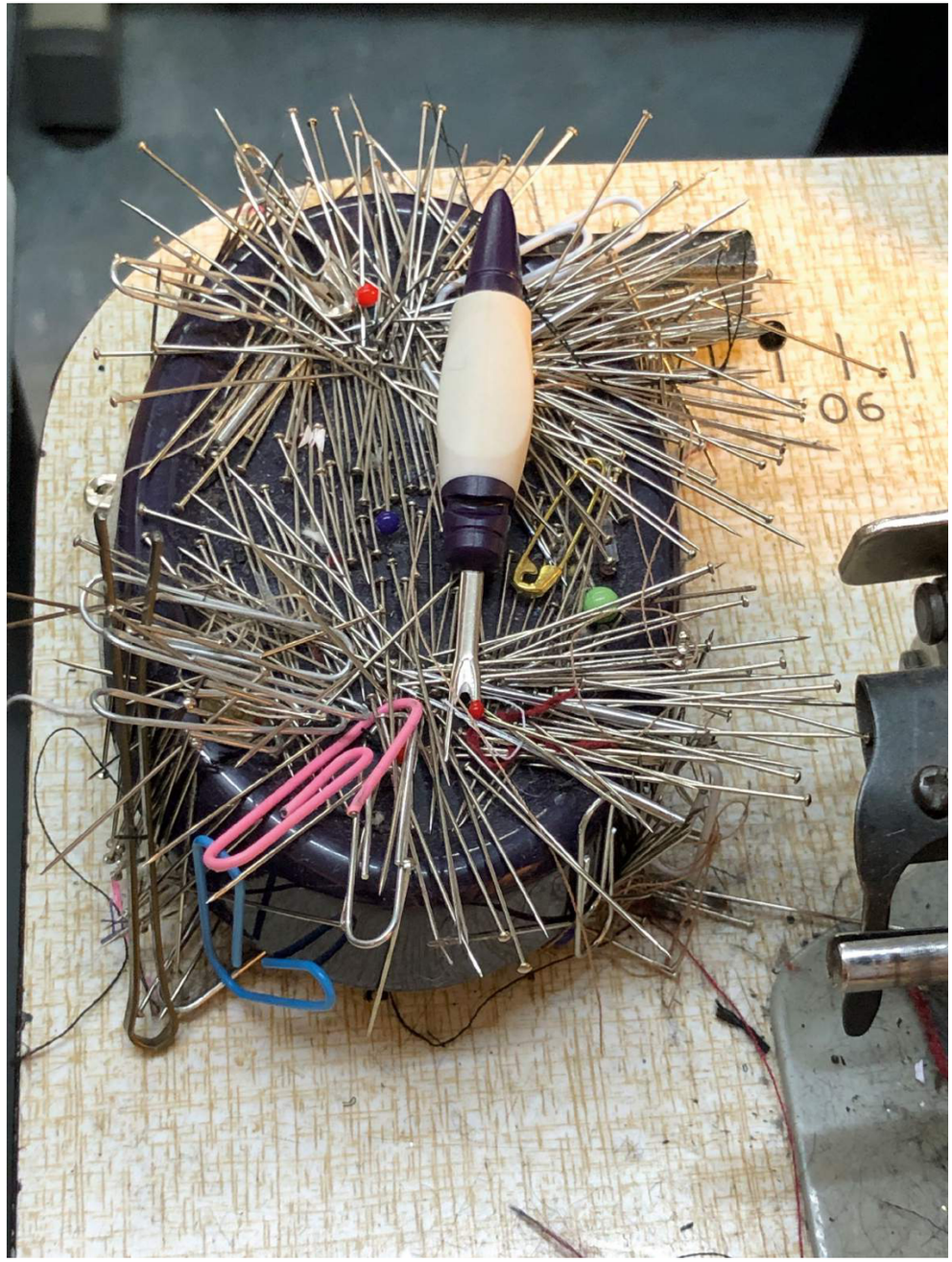
Linn Becker
Model milliner

Karen Mitchell
Machinist

Ruby Parker
Model milliner

Annika Lievesley
Communications manager

Monica Bertozzi
Production manager

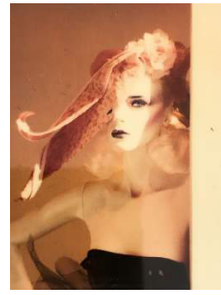


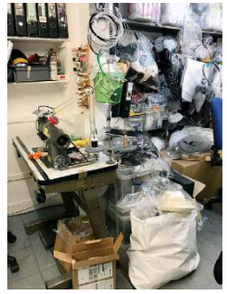
Richard Butler
Machinist

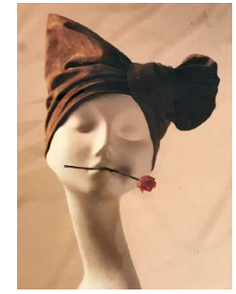
Craig West
Head of the soft workroom

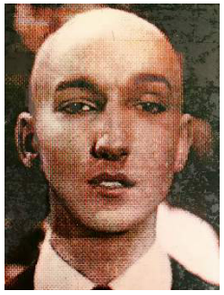
Kate Winters
Cutter

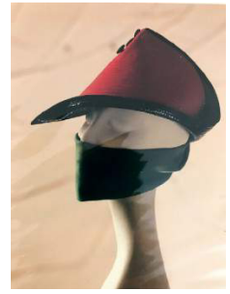
Mister Softee
FT ICE CREAM
STEPHEN JONES ESQ



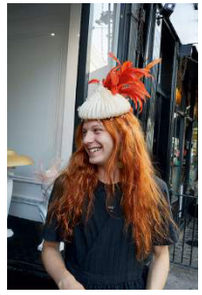


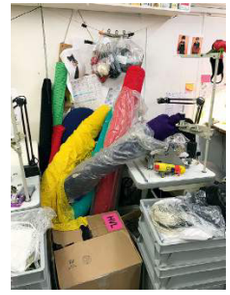






William Dill-Russell
Boutique manager





the Times of Bill Cunningham

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ZONE
Traffic enforcement cameras
STEPHEN JONES ESQ.
20

Stephen Jones grew up by the seaside, near Liverpool in north-west England. His school sometimes had sandcastle-building competitions. He remembers one, when he was seven years old. He and his friend Mary had spent some time planning a winner, but then the kids next to them built the Taj Mahal out of sand, and decorated it with shells. Stephen and Mary's effort looked unsurprisingly meagre by comparison. Quick thinking was called for. Young Master Jones whipped out his white cotton handkerchief, ripped it into four squares and draped it on his sandcastle. 'It's the Taj Mahal's laundry,' he proudly announced. They still didn't win, but they got the laugh. And there you have an early lesson in putting something on top of something else to make it look better, more charming, more entertaining.

For now, I have to make do with one summery Saturday at his shop in Covent Garden.

Tim Blanks: Let's go back. Where did everything start?

Stephen Jones: Everybody's childhood is normal when they are growing up because that is all they know. However, having said that, I knew I was a bit different because I had three fingers missing on one hand. I absolutely never had a problem with it, but other people did. What they think is that my mother's umbilical cord got wrapped around my upper arm – I have an odd line there – and so my fingers couldn't develop. That is one theory. The other theory is that at the children's hospital in Liverpool in late 1956, which was where my mother was going as an outpatient, they were doing various experiments with radon isotopes, which were supposed to ease the pain of childbirth. I just happened to read about this on the Internet, and I worked out that, yes, it was that hospital and yes, my mother did go there and it was exactly at that time. Funnily enough, all the hospital records have been lost from that period. I asked my mother about it, and she couldn't talk about it, but I think for any parent from that generation who had a child who was a variation from the norm, they were brought up to think it was a problem to be concealed. Though they never ever showed that to me. I remember my mother saying, 'You have a strange hand, but some people have strange brains and that is much more serious.' However, I guess it did mark me out from other people.

And other kids can be brutal.

Well, it was never an issue for me. I went to a nursery school, which was a state school where my sisters had been, but I wasn't doing well. I can't remember if it was to do with my hand. But anyway, when I was six or seven, I was sent to a private prep school in West Kirby, which my mother had attended. And that was great. I made friends there that I still have. We would talk about television, this whole window to another world, which was the most exciting thing in our lives. Though I loved music, too. Any music. Apparently when I was two or three years old, if my older sisters wanted me to be quiet, they would just put a record on and I would dance for hours. Literally hours. And they could get on with snogging their boyfriends behind the sofa or whatever they were doing.

'Any post-war-generation parent who had a child who was a variation from the norm was brought up to think it was a problem to be concealed.'

He's still doing it nearly 60 years later. Is there anyone for whom Stephen Jones hasn't made a hat? Is there any scene that he didn't move through – Blitz to Buckingham Palace, Aspen to Ascot, Margate to Mars – Zelig-like, in his four-decade ascent to the pinnacle of his profession? I could talk to him for days and still feel I've barely scratched the surface. Not long after the conversation that follows, he was set to embark on a seven-day Atlantic crossing with his husband Craig West, New York to Southampton on the *Queen Mary 2* for Cunard's annual Transatlantic Fashion Week. In a nutshell: '100 hats, 19 models, 15 girls, 4 boys. They don't change, but their hats do. And I'll be talking.'

Maybe that's what I really need. Cast away on an ocean with Jones talking and nothing else for me to do but listen.

But at school, what we talked about was TV shows. It was all space exploration, and Gerry and Sylvia Anderson's puppet shows like *Stingray* and *Thunderbirds*.[1] With my friend Larry, we used to imagine that we were the characters in those shows. And in a way, that was our reality much more than anything else, up until we were about nine: I was in a TV series and I was a puppet. Years later when I first met Jeremy Healy, his name for me – and many people's name for me – was Lady Penelope,[2] because they thought I was posh. Which I vaguely am, but not really.

Well, you *do* have incredible manners.

Which comes from being at prep school and boarding school. So that was me as a little boy. Not family, not sports. Living in TV as a science-fiction puppet.

I know you did Lady Penelope's hat later on for the movie.[3] That must have been a full circle-of-life moment. But were you interested in science at all?

I love science. In fact, when I went to boarding school, the master who had taught my father in 1938 was still teaching, and he taught me physics, which was one of my best subjects. My father was an engineer. The management of stress and strains was a very big part of what he did, as it is for me.

I'm obsessed with the idea of manifest destiny in people's lives. The nature of so many of your hats is aerodynamic, and the idea that you might have a genetic predisposition to that…

True, I like my hats to be aerodynamic, and other people's hats throughout history, in terms of solidity and weight and majesty, have each done different things. It is so funny that you touch on that because it is an idea that was quite strange for me when I first heard about it maybe 12 years ago. I remember people saying how Saint Laurent doing the blazer guided the way we look at fashion so completely that we can no longer see that how we view fashion is through the vision of Saint Laurent. It is funny how, being 62 years old, I am now experiencing the same thing. That the world of hats is seen – certainly on this side of the Atlantic – through Stephen Jones and what I have done. Valerie Steele[4] told me this. There's a school of Stephen Jones in London and a school of Lola[5] in New York, because so many people have trained with her and with me. It's sort of flattering, but it's also unnerving, because it makes you want to get on to the next thing that is aerodynamic and light.

How many hats have you designed in your life?

Probably like a hundred thousand.

I remember once you mentioned you didn't like the idea of being described as prolific.

Prolific is somehow the opposite to the idea of exclusive. If I'm prolific, it's because I have to be, in a funny way. I have to do turnover and make payroll and run a business and so I have to produce a lot of things to make the whole thing work. But at the same time one of the big design things I have learned is do a lot and don't over-analyse every last thing because then you kill it. Actually, it is much better to move onto the next thing and put the previous experience into the next thing, so you can get on and do something fresh rather just reworking it and reworking it.

It's an intriguing psychological twist that you're so devoted to curating exhibitions dedicated to hats. Did you ever think about designing for posterity? How many of those hats ended up in a museum rather than on a head?

I have never ever designed stuff thinking, 'Oh, that will be great in a museum.'

But now you know there is a world of hats 'seen through the eyes of Stephen Jones', does that bring in a self-consciousness that wasn't there before? Now that you can see yourself through other people's eyes.

It would be disingenuous to say I don't. That is in the background, though, and when you are designing a new collection, you are doing new things that you hope are going to be worn by people. You are not designing for posterity. Completely aside, I had some fantastic news yesterday. My Winter 2018 collection was called *Crowns* and was based on African-Americans' love and understanding of hats. At the time Pharrell was being called out for wearing a Native American headdress,[6] I thought, 'I understand why this is going on, but at the same time to my mind it is completely ridiculous.' The reason you go to another culture for inspiration is because you like it and you respect it in the first place. If you didn't you wouldn't be using it, *durrrrh*! So, when I was planning this collection, I spent two days with the curators at the National Museum of African-American History and Culture in Washington to really research it. You go into a room with these women and they're all in their 50s and 60s and you wonder what journey they had to make to get to such positions of cultural and political power. I said to the director, 'Wow, this is such a big building, the White House looks very small from here.' And I mentioned that I didn't think much of the present occupant. She said, 'Mr Jones, that's why the blinds are closed.' I asked, 'Why? So you can't see out, or he can't see in?' She said, 'Both. And it will stay that way for the next few years.' And that broke the ice. So yesterday, I had a phone call from the senior curator there, and she said they would like to buy the *Crowns* collection from me in its entirety. I almost cried.

'There were other things going on at boarding school that weren't approved of, especially Roxy Music and David Bowie, as you can well imagine.'

What did they know of you before?
They knew that I was a famous hatmaker working for Christian Dior and they were surprised from afar that I would show interest in them and their museum. I think they are all a little bit surprised to see how popular it is.

Following that gloriously sweeping digression, we return to the whimsical world of sci-fi puppets.

I once curated an issue for *Cent Magazine*, which was all about whimsy and I had Bevis Hillier[7] write a piece called 'The Art of Being English'.

Do you think that whimsy can survive in a multicultural society when it is so intrinsically English?
I think whimsy can be from anywhere. of Liverpool and on the other side, the Welsh mountains. So the one thing I did experience was this ever-changing beautiful landscape of nature, and this fantastic panorama. I could see the waves coming in like white horses, boats coming and going, a lighthouse, a lifeboat man, the whole thing of growing up by the sea until I went away to boarding school at 10 or 11.

Growing up by the sea does infuse you with a sense of possibility.
Yes, and combined with *Stingray*, it's going to do things to a young guy! Even though I didn't know what it was then. Probably a little gay boy, knowing he was a bit different. I don't think sexuality is formed completely at that age, but I think there is a sense of a range of possibilities, which focus as you get older. someone weaker. I found out how to live through it, and also I just sort of sidestepped the whole thing, because I would just say: 'Well, I am going to do some art or music.' There were other things going on which weren't approved of, especially Roxy Music and David Bowie, as you can imagine. Everyone else was into Yes or Emerson, Lake & Palmer.[10] But I made some very good friends there and we were very supportive of each other. My friends Richard and Andrew, I'm still friendly with now. There were three of us doing art together and we taught each other. Bizarrely enough, the head of rugby was also the art teacher.

What drew you to art?
I was always quite good at it. I didn't really have to think about it. It just

'I walked into Saint Martin's and on *this* side was a group of girls wearing beige. On the *other* side were five punks. So it was, 'Do I turn left or right?''

When you talk about it, you isolate it as something distinctively English in your work, as opposed to the work of Italians or the French.
Oh yes, absolutely. But that is its charm. Slightly failing. And not trying to be too polished.

And incredibly idiosyncratic. With your obsession with sci-fi puppets, at what point did design enter your consciousness? Because those shows were super-designed.
It was really just this fantasy about going off to a different place. It was a set; it wasn't real life. I mean, my real life was a nice middle-class family and a nice house. I had a fantastic view from my bedroom window: a small road and then the sea. And on one side, on a dark day, you could see the flickering lights

With all of that going on, you headed off to boarding school in 1968. How on earth was that?
Fairly draconian. It was very much an old-fashioned 1950s institution. I was considered a sissy in as much as I liked art, which at my school was enough. It was beyond the pale. I was at the same school my father had been to, and he had been captain of the rugby team in 1938 when he was in the upper fifth, let alone the lower sixth.[8] So he was a legend, and if war hadn't come, he might have played for England. He was a great sportsman. So, of course, they thought I was the great hope, but you learned how to do it. I played hooker on the team.[9]

You weren't bullied though?
I don't know. Was I bullied? Not really, the bullies would probably pick on seemed to be genetic somehow. My father was an engineer and very good draughtsman as well, which I discovered years later. My mother had a real sense of eye and colour and proportion.

Did she make her own clothes?
No, no, no. She wouldn't do anything like that. Or housework, even though it was quite a neat house. What she loved was gardening; she was a fantastic gardener. She would take me around gardens and art galleries in the north-west.

Do you remember your first trip to London?
I was with my father. I must have been six or seven. I don't really remember much about the trip, but I remember we went to this café… it was called the Sands,[11] and I think it was done in

1960s Persian. Like *I Dream of Jeannie*.[12] It had a gold awning. For me, this was unbelievable. We went up to the first floor, and the steps had illuminated glass bricks set in concrete and they were illuminated from underneath, turquoise and emerald green and blue-ish colours. This was a real turning point in my life. I remember the waitress came over and asked what I would like and I said I would like a Coca-Cola and it came to me in a glass with cubes of ice and a stripy straw and a slice of lemon. I had never seen anything like it in my life! Then I realized the possibilities of life! Just that idea that you could take this very normal thing and make a fantasy out of it…

Was that your Rosebud moment, the Coca-Cola with the ice and lemon?
actually very, very funny and very interesting to see when people tell them that they are not right, or even call their judgement into question. They have to be that clear or they'd never be there in the first place. I was not ambitious; I was a late starter, and there was just a whole series of things. Actually, there was a very specific moment when I *did* come to a fork in the road. On my first day at Saint Martin's in October 1976, I walked into a room and on *this* side was a group of girls all wearing beige – it might have been cashmere but, as far as I was concerned, it was tweed – and they were all from the south-east and a lot of them had done the foundation course at Saint Martin's. Then on the *other* side, there were five punks. So it was, 'Do I turn left or right?' I turned towards the punks; I saw that was the future. I didn't the punks. One of them was a girl called Sían. Black denim jacket, white shirt with a black shoelace tie. Doc Martens, which I'd never seen before. She had a number-one buzzcut, which was completely shocking. Out of her top pocket was hanging a tampon on a string and she'd coloured the end with red magic marker. If anyone did that now, people would freak out in the street. Or at least men would. But it was just so funny. And there was another girl, Chrissie, who I'm still friends with. She was dressed like the Queen, in a big rose-print taffeta ballgown. I think she was wearing it over jeans. Sían asked me if I wanted to come for lunch with her and her boyfriend, so we went to this place called Soho Market, just off Charing Cross Road.[13] And her boyfriend was Shane McGowan from The Pogues. I

'I've always said I was the least ambitious person that I knew. It is just a bloody hat – I don't want to change the world with that hat.'

I don't think there was *one* Rosebud moment. It was a series of things, because it has been a sort of slow build. It wasn't like I ever came to a junction and asked myself, 'Do I turn left or right?' I started on a different road from the word go. I only realize that now. And what is that, determinism? Is it genes? Is it circumstance? I don't know.

Could it be simple ambition?
No, no. I've always said I was the least ambitious person that I knew. It is just a bloody hat – I don't want to change the world with that hat. And I don't believe that every woman should be walking down the street wearing a Stephen Jones hat. But dress designers have to have that ego, that clear self-belief which says, 'I am right.' And it is think those beige people knew anything about fashion anyway, or at least not the fashion that I was hoping for.

And who were you at that point? Were you raw clay waiting to be moulded or did you have an *image*?
I had an image. Like a Left Bank punk look. I was wearing a black turtleneck with black jeans and a black beret and chipped black nail varnish.

Did you have hair?
Yes, I think it was dyed blue-black, like Bryan Ferry.

Did heads turn when you walked in? Like, 'Look at the new boy'?
They looked, then carried on talking. If my look was strong, it didn't really fit in with either group. So I went over to very occasionally see him now and we still remember each other after all these years. So there were Sían and Shane, and that was my first day at Saint Martin's. There was another girl called Eve and she was going out with Adam Ant. Adam and Eve.

If this was October 1976, the Sex Pistols had already played their first gig at Saint Martin's.
Yeah, and they had already played at High Wycombe when I was doing my foundation course there.[14] While I was finishing boarding school in Liverpool, my parents moved to Marlow in Buckinghamshire, so I went to the local college in High Wycombe. And that's where I saw the Sex Pistols.

And what happened?

It was a disaster. They came on late, they played two songs, their equipment stopped working. Everyone from the students' union wanted their money back. It was a nightmare. Johnny Rotten had been on the front of the papers, so I knew that was brewing when I got to Saint Martin's. With not much design tuition happening at college, that was what the focus was on. We actually formed a band, with Chrissie. There were six of us and we were called Pink Parts. My friend John was the lead singer and a completely electric performer, like a teen pop star. He had that absolute charisma. He went on to work with *Spitting Image*,[15] and made the puppet of the Queen. Martin was a fantastic musician. He went out with Ruthie, our bassist. He became an antique book-dealer. And Paul Ferguson went on to become the drummer in Killing Joke. And there were three backing singers. I was one of the singers.

Sounding like?
Sort of like the Supremes, because we were all singing in harmony. We definitely had a sound.

Did you have record company interest?
Yes, we did. We supported Wayne County[16] quite a few times. We did the 100 Club[17]; we played the Nag's Head at High Wycombe, which was the biggest venue outside London for punk bands.

Do you have any tapes?
No, I don't, but I know someone who does. We were recorded in the 100 Club.

How long did Pink Parts last?
About a year. At the end of my first year at Saint Martin's, we had to decide whether we were going to carry on being singers. You know, trying to rehearse once or twice a week, writing songs; it was a commitment. We had about 10 songs of our own and we did covers of other people's songs. I wonder though if we'd been better musicians and if we'd had more practice…

Maybe you'd never have made hats.
I would never have made hats. I was never sure if I was a punk trying to be a fashion student or a fashion student trying to be a punk. I think ultimately, I was a fashion student holidaying as a punk.

But wasn't punk an art-student thing anyway?
No, I think punk was, at the very beginning, a mixture of different things. It was definitely club life, it was definitely gay, and it was a previous generation. I really do believe that people like Duggie Fields and Luciana Martinez,[18] were sort of proto-punks. They were the people that we all looked to. And certainly Vivienne [Westwood] and Malcolm [McLaren] looked to them for inspiration. Vivienne wouldn't particularly want to say that she was influenced by Luciana and Duggie, but they were into that really 1950s glam, which was such an essential part of early punk. I saw an article on them in my sister's *Honey* magazine[19] – I must have been in the lower sixth, at boarding school – and I thought when I grow up, I want to be like that. I really did. They were such extraordinary, fun, extravagant people.

The funny thing is, I know that the story of the Blitz Kids[20] is that we invented our media because the established media didn't want us, so it was *i-D*, *The Face* and *BLITZ*, and all that, but it was under the umbrella of Luciana and Duggie, and Andrew Logan and the Alternative Miss World contest,[21] and Zandra Rhodes, and Divine and John Waters, and *they* were London's glitterati, and when they saw us, they took us along for the ride. They were probably 10 years older than us, but we got on with them because we looked fabulous. I mean, Luciana showed me how to get into a club and how to blag a drink. A very, very important guide to growing up.

I think the first time I ever saw Steve Strange was at the Embassy[22] in 1978. He was with Zandra and she would always have this gang of incredible-looking people with her. He was dressed like a frontier scout in buckskin and fringed boots. And Jasper Conran must have been 17 or 18 and he was dressed in a sailor suit like Tadzio in *Death in Venice*,[23] with a big pearl necklace on. I loved the Embassy, it was so much more fun than Studio 54.
You went on roller skates and wearing hot pants, I hope. When I was at college, the Embassy Club was always somewhere quite magical. Sure, we knew the Vortex[24] and the 100 Club and the punk clubs, but in 1978, 1979, the Embassy Club was full-on glamour and it was always really difficult to get in. The door bitch didn't want fashion students hanging around. Me and my friend Susy would basically solicit members at the door. And sometimes we did get in. Don't forget the background of all this: the Winter of Discontent, all the strikes, huge mountains of rubbish in Leicester Square, rats everywhere.[25] There was Peppermint Park as well, and Joe Allen's.[26] So there was all the Americana that was somehow coming in, and all that Miami pastel thing. We didn't know it then, but it was really the beginnings of post-modernism. What we were up against was a great big eiderdown made out of brown tweed – and what we really wanted was Amanda Lear on the cover of *For Your Pleasure*.[27] Last Friday I saw, for the first time, a film of my final fashion show at Saint Martin's. Prince of Wales feathers made out of dead seagulls. The press wasn't allowed into the Saint Martin's shows in those days, so the show had been filmed. And I used the song on the flip side of Roxy Music's 'Ladytron', which was this weird dirge.[28] I learned some things at college but I didn't learn design at all. I still can't draw a hat. You can't really be taught design; you have an interest in it and you channel it. I learned mostly from the old issues of *Vogue* in the library. There was a huge box from the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, that no one was interested in. When we were told to go to the library to do research, most people thought that was an excuse to have a glass of wine. But I loved those old *Vogues*.

Was anyone doing hats at Saint Martin's in those days?
No, no one. David Shilling[29] was the only milliner of note in London. I didn't really have a clue what I was going to do. My tailoring tutor Peter Lewis-Crown said I had to get extra help, so he sent me to the fashion house Lachasse as a tailoring intern.[30] Internships were called work placement in those days. I couldn't really sew, so I made coffee and picked up pins. Shirley Hex[31] was the head of the millinery workroom. That was the eureka moment for my life in hats, because the hatmakers seemed to be having so much more fun than the dressmakers. The biggest change was the beginning of my third year in 1978, when this group of really interesting people came into the first year: Stephen Linard, Kim Bowen, Lee Sheldrick, Fiona Dealey, Sade Adu. They all had a really interesting point of view and they all looked amazing. Suddenly there was this whole new energy from people two years younger than me who were absolutely not punks. They were more connected to people like Duggie Fields. It was Dinny Hall and John Maybury and Cerith Wyn Evans.[32] And I became friendly with them. I remember at a gig at the London College of Printing, I went up to Kim Bowen and said, 'I like your earrings.' That was my pick-up line! They were made by John Sellers who was a student at the Royal College of Art. He did all the invitations for Andrew Logan's Alternative Miss World, and he went on to form textiles company Hodge Sellers. They became great unsung heroes who did the textiles and prints for Azzedine Alaïa, and worked extensively with Louis Vuitton and Chanel. Anyway, he made these black plastic earrings for Kim and they were sort of New Wave, and life was changing again, with the Next Big Thing coming along.

New Romantics?
New Wave, which was before New Romantic. So that was all about bright neons and geometry, black rubber, wrap-around sunglasses, fluorescent. I loved it; it connected with my love of puppets and all that. It was the complete antithesis of punk as well, really new and different. Kim looked amazing. Sade looked amazing. I mean, we didn't even know she could sing. She was wearing solo-in-the-spotlight sheath dresses and high heels and a straw hat to college. Suddenly, people really started to work a look. They were very competitive with each other. I was told I could have two first-years to help me with my collection, so I chose Stephen Linard[33] and Kim. They told me Stephen could make clothes, but he was actually a complete genius. He had done a tailoring course in Southend, so he could adjust the patterns and make things work. I was a bit horrified to find Kim couldn't sew at all so she really didn't do anything, but she was just this extraordinary-looking person and we became very good friends. And I got into everything that they were into.

You must have been making hats by then?
Yes. But I wasn't really wearing them. When I left college, I was still making women's clothes, and hats were just an extra. I went to Paris, tried to get a job. I actually went for a job interview with Madame Grès, number 1, Place Vendôme.[34] When I arrived, I told the secretary I had an appointment. She said, 'I don't think so.' I insisted I'd confirmed it. She made a phone call,

'I didn't learn design at all. I still can't draw a hat. I just learned mostly from the old issues of *Vogue* in the library. I loved those old *Vogues*.'

'In my first shop, I was selling to everyone from the wife of the governor of the Bank of England to Lady This and Lady That to a Russian hooker.'

then said, 'I'm sorry, you don't have an appointment here.' I realized that, because there were lots of mirrors in the showroom, Madame Grès could see from the far end of showroom. I guess she didn't like the look of me, but I loved what she did at that time. Oddly enough, she was the aunt of Sybille de Saint Phalle,[35] who became my first assistant, and went on to become John Galliano's first assistant in 1984. I arrived back in London with no money. I had to give up my flat and went to work for my father driving a truck as a fruit delivery man. In the evening, I made hats for Kim Bowen. I came down to London one day, opened up the back of my car and said, 'Kim, here are 15 hats for you.' This was Spring 1980, a year after leaving college. She wore them out and about, and Steve Strange saw them. Jean Paul showed me a film of it and asked me if I wanted to do hats for his women's collection. On that same trip, I went to visit Azzedine Alaïa in Rue de Bellechasse. Azzedine quite looked after me. I only found out many years later he'd had lunch with Joseph and told him he had to buy my hats for his shops around the world. That started my wholesale business, just as Bloomingdale's was starting to buy them, too. Azzedine loved what I was doing but he wasn't showing at that time. So he sent me to Thierry Mugler. I worked with him for a couple of years. We were really close; we'd hang out when he came to London. Claude Montana had been asking for a few seasons if I could make hats for him and I'd turned him down. Then he said he was going to do a men's show and could I work on that? I tried down. Fashion was changing and he didn't change with it.

Where was John Galliano while all this was going on?
He was the class of 1984. He was quite a bit younger. Colin McDowell said he went to the Blitz, but I think he was a bit too young.

I could swear that I read you met John at the Blitz, he asked you to do hats for him and you said no.
I doubt it. I don't really remember John asking me to make hats. The first person to make hats for him was Shirley Hex, the lady who taught me, and then Bouke de Vries made some hats for him. *That* was when I said no. And then Philip Treacy made hats for him one season. And then I introduced Steven

'I eventually got a message from Thierry [Mugler] saying that he would call the police unless I left. So I went to work with Claude [Montana] instead.'

He was working in P.X.,[36] which was just in the process of moving from James Street to Endell Street in Covent Garden, and he said they had a basement they weren't using and asked if I'd like it. So, on October 1, 1980, I opened my own little shop. It went really well, selling to all sorts of different people, from the wife of the governor of the Bank of England to Lady This and Lady That to a Russian hooker. Then the financial arrangement with the shop changed and I went to work in Wardour Street. Boy George asked me to be in the video for 'Do You Really Want to Hurt Me?' I was wearing a fez and when Jean Paul Gaultier saw the video, he asked me to model in his first men's fashion show. But I fell off my brother-in-law's motorbike and I couldn't be in the show. When I visited Paris a few months later, to call Thierry to see what he thought and I didn't hear so I sent him a letter by recorded delivery, still didn't hear anything. When I was in Paris a month later, I went to Mugler. I knew everyone there. I waited a couple of hours, but Thierry wouldn't see me. Eventually, I got a message that he would call the police unless I left. So I went to work with Claude. And I worked with him from 1986 onwards, for 15 years through the apex of his career, at Lanvin as well. It was extraordinary and wonderful to see the mastery of technique, the elegance of things he created, and I also saw how it all went wrong. He was drinking, going out too much. Béatrice Paul, who was his contact with the outside world, told him to calm it down. He didn't like that, and she left.[37] And then slowly the walls came crashing Robinson[38] to John. Shirley was teaching millinery at Epsom School of Art. She asked me to go down and judge a hat competition. There were all these crazy hats, but there was one tiny pink boater, so well-made and mannered there was something neurotic about it. I gave it first prize. I asked the winner – it was Steven Robinson – if there was anything else he wanted to do, and he said he wanted to work for John Galliano. So I asked John if Steven could intern for him, and within a week, he was John's Svengali. And then, one day years later, I had a phone call from Steven. John was already an icon; he was the It person absolutely, and he was doing great fashion shows. My first with him was *Princess Lucretia*, in 1993.[39] It was a totally different situation from Claude. Suddenly I could express my quirky

Englishness in a way I never could do before. The real magic of John was that he had Steven and Bill Gaytten[40] working with him. John would say the story is a Russian princess running from wolves; Steven would imagine fabulous accessories and work with Manolo [Blahnik] to make shoes; and Bill would work on the cuts to turn John's inspirations into clothes. That was the magic about having the three of them together.

Was working with John your most productive partnership?
Yes, I think so. I always think the most productive partnership is the one I have now, but the hats that John and I made together were often extraordinary, and certainly have gone down in fashion history. I talk about the transformative thing that happens when real people wear real hats, but when I was making things for a Galliano fashion show, that was a different brief. It was not about selling or reality, it was just about the aesthetic and the beauty of the thing that we were trying to create. It would probably be transformative at the same time, but really, we were trying to make something fabulous.

Sometimes it seemed like beauty was secondary to impact. There was a sort of iconoclastic challenge in an idea like turning a hundred thousand popsicle sticks into a hat.
Yes, but the most important thing was that it was beautiful, not the fact it was made from a hundred thousand popsicle sticks. It had to be exquisitely proportioned, beautifully made. Once we made a little boater out of matches because I had loved the idea of sailors building Notre Dame out of matches. Everything had a story, and what was unusual about John wasn't just that the things that we were doing had a grandeur and a seasonality, but always that they had some sort of charm to them, too, which was particularly British. A French person or an Italian person couldn't have done that. That was what attracted me to working with John because I knew his clothes had that charming element to them. Yes, he could do all sorts of different things, but what brought his clothes together, especially at Dior, which was 14 years of so many different styles, was a charm, a humour, a lightness.

The ingenuity of it, there was almost a make-do-and-mend element to it. Let's take everything that we have at our fingertips and turn it into something amazing. Even the 'Matrix' collection in 1999, those hats with the furs. I mean, have you ever seen anything like that in your life?
No, and you won't ever see anything like that again. I knew when we were talking about hunting, they were going to go with hunting clothes. So, we said should we have different animals on the head, different furs. Even then, I said we should be respectful of the animals. In our minds, it was more respectful to show what the animal actually looked like. So, I went to the best taxidermist in France, on a farm about an hour and a half's drive outside Paris. We talked about the different poses and really spent a lot of time. I went out there every day for about three weeks and they were great. We got flak in the UK, people yelling, 'monster'. The thing is if you are a hat-maker you have to use animal products. In the 1980s, the law governing feathers came in and I have only been able to use what we term 'barnyard fowl', chickens, geese, ducks, pheasants.[41] We can use ostriches as well, because they are farmed, even though they are not indigenous to the UK. We can't use peacock feathers any more. And you can't use bird of paradise, or anything like that.

Those incredible plumes you did would be impossible now. What were they?
It was peacock for Dior. Albino peacock. There aren't many of those in the world! Also, the big feather headdresses I did for Marc [Jacobs] at Vuitton, they were peacock.

'Jean Paul Gaultier asked me to model in his first men's fashion show. But I fell off my brother-in-law's motorbike and couldn't make it.'

I imagine it makes your job more interesting that you now need to realize the most extreme fantasies in a more prosaic way.
It is always changing every season. We can get this, we can't get that. This is outlawed, that is impossible. Also, at the same time, we couldn't use furs. I had so many suppliers who existed in the late 1970s and had been around since the war; they all closed down. There were three major flower suppliers in Soho, when I was first starting, with rooms and rooms of fabric flowers. You want anemones? Yes, we have them in 25 colours. All those people have gone. They can all be made in the Far East for much cheaper. The centre of the hat business when I first started was Luton; there were 80 factories doing a huge turnover.[42] Now there are about six or seven.

Does that mean that in 10 years there will be none?
No, this is the weird thing about the hat business. Hats used to be a department-store purchase. Harrods at one end of the scale, Dickins and Jones or Debenhams at the other, they would have a hat department. Most of those hats were made in the UK, some might have been imported from Italy. A lot of the straws were imported from China anyway and had been for hundreds of years. But when hat-wearing declined, at the same time there were a lot of casual hats coming in: bobble hats, beanies made in Korea or China. And then formal hats started to be made over there as well, because that's where the materials were coming from in the first place so it was just much cheaper. So in 10 years' time, I think that hats will still be made abroad and there will still be a few dealers here to work with them and you will be able to buy hats everywhere. Actually, today in every shop you go into, you can buy a hat. In every fashion shop, there'll be one or two, a beanie or a simple straw hat. It might be more for window dressing than it is for actual dressing; though if you take the new Dior shop, which just opened on the Champs-Élysées, it sold 151 hats last Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

I hope you're on a royalty. Good lord, you've been designing hats for Dior for almost 25 years. Could you even choose a favourite show? I thought the Dior couture show for Spring 1998 at the Opéra Garnier was stupendous.[43]
It was amazing. But at the same time, trying to get all that stuff ready every season was a jump into the dark, into oblivion. 'Am I going to be able to do it or not?' It was terrifying. For the Opéra Garnier, it was gorgeous when you saw everything coming down, but I remember we did a green and white mask made of papier-mâché, which hadn't dried yet. So it kept bending, and the whole thing was about to fall apart. And there was another girl in a huge boater, and I pinned the hat to her wig, but the wig wasn't pinned to her head and when she turned round, her wig moved over her face and the hat fell off.

How many hats would you have made for something like that?
Now Maria Grazia might show 80 outfits, each with a headpiece, but in those days there was no way we could made more than 25 or 30 because each outfit was so complicated. I think in that show, almost every person had something on their head. Normally when we would be having a design meeting, it was always like, 'What has she got on her head?' The hat reinforced the story. If she was wearing a dress like that, why would not she want to wear something on her head? But maybe she's actually ripped it off and then put it on the side of the stage.

And you'd still have to make it? The completeness of the vision, who was that?
That was all John. The one other person who has that kind of understanding and who takes it that far is Marc Jacobs. I remember the first season I worked on his own label and not on Vuitton, he said, 'It's two women walking down the street.' I asked, 'Where are they?' He said, 'Rome, they're shopping, but they're not sure where yet.' I said, 'I think they are probably going to buy gloves. Are they going to match their gloves to the outfits?' And he said, 'Don't be silly, they're just buying gloves.'

He had a whole movie playing in his head.
Yes. It was a movie that he knew, but somehow we were inventing a new movie together. And this is interesting. People so often have a story behind the collection, as an influence, but actually the important story is the one you are creating. Even though I am someone who will research things to the nth degree, it is actually what you make of it that is the exciting part. It's not where the collection's come from, it's where it's going.

Do you want to talk about the end of the Galliano era?
People would say designers were overworked or whatever, but what they didn't realize is that we were actually running two houses. We were doing all of Dior – four prêt-à-porters every year, two haute coutures and furs and this and that and the other, the publicity and fragrances and all of that – and Galliano, which was four women's collections, two men's and a licensed collection. The speed at which you had to work and make decisions was crazy. You didn't agonize over the length of a beige skirt, you did it and got on with it because you had to. That, in a curious way, was why things looked fresh, because they weren't overworked. But it was a crazy pace to maintain. And after Steven passed away, it became even more impossible, in the same way that it had killed Christian Dior himself after 10 years and Yves Saint Laurent had a nervous breakdown; John suffered a similar fate eventually. And of course Bill [Gaytten] was there and he was a fantastic number two and held it all together when everybody thought it was going to fall apart. But Monsieur Arnault wanted someone who had a strong and clear vision of the future. I knew Raf because I had worked with him at Jil Sander, and when he came to Dior I was the only person he knew in the building.[44] But he did the very opposite of John and it was correct that he did, though he still used extraordinary techniques. Even though he had loved hats at his own label and at Jil Sander, obviously hats at Dior were more complicated because John had shown so many of them. So Raf did hats sometimes. I did a bow thing that went round the neck, it was like a collar that had been in the hair but it kept falling down in the fitting room so I suggested we tie it round the neck, and those were the first three looks for Raf's first prêt-à-porter. Even though I make hats, I have worked on clothes, too. I worked on many clothes for John. I did all the armour when he did the show on armour,[45] and I did the collar things for Claude Montana, and many, many years ago, I worked on the mini-crini with Vivienne Westwood.[46] Sometimes I slip from the head to further down the body. I worked on constructed things like that with Raf. And then when Maria Grazia arrived, she wanted to try the hats on herself as well as a fit model. She was not so much of a hat wearer, but her daughter Rachele was, so she started to make hats and there was a season when she put all my sketches of the hats in the programme. That was the first time I'd actually had acknowledgement within Dior of what I was doing, after having been there for 19 years.

John had never thought to include you as one of the contributors?
No, Steven would never have allowed it. But Maria Grazia was very much into it. She told them, 'You have to do little films of Stephen Jones and put them on social media and Instagram and so on.' I have worked with so many different designers over the years and I have actually had contracts with only two brands: Dior and Marc Jacobs. All the others have been season by season.

How, in an industry which is notoriously ungenerous and short of memory, have you managed to work with so many different and difficult people over extended periods of time, quite often simultaneously?
Hats are a product of conversations, and you have different conversations with different characters; that is how you develop your relationship with them, and what pops out at the end of that relationship is a hat. And yes, you have to be a diplomat. Sometimes you have to trust them, even though you may not like, know or understand what they are doing. If you don't like what they are doing, it is maybe because of your preconceived ideas of what is beautiful or ugly and maybe your ideas need to be shaken up a bit. I think that would be very unsettling to a lot of people, but I am quite grounded in the way that I can leave all of that behind, I can get on the Eurostar, come back to England and be myself. The fact that maybe I always feel like an outsider is actually a huge benefit, because I can be an insider and an outsider at the same time. That gives me the ability to step away from it. I don't just work with one person. I know if I stop working at Marc's, a week later I'll have someone else. So, my happiness, my reward, my *being* is not coming from one single person. That is very, very important.

Do you think you thrive on being unsettled though?
Yeah, I quite like being unsettled. I like being surprised. I don't want to feel the same way all the time. I want fashion to inspire me.

What difference has social media made for you?
A great difference, because for us it was always about whether you got a hat in *Elle* or not, and whether people were going to know from that what it was that we did here. And the magazine would sell a million copies or whatever, so it was great to spread the message in that way. But now we can reach so many people in another way. Before, the press was the judge and the jury, because hats were about image as much as the object itself. But the great thing now is that it's just more direct. It's the client who is judge and jury.

When you talk about burnout for designers like Galliano, McQueen or Montana, I think people would look at your workload – all your own

'Hats are a product of conversations. Different conversations with different characters. And what pops out at the end of that conversation is a hat.'

'I know if I stop working at Marc's, a week later I'll have someone else. So, my happiness, my reward, my *being* is not coming from one single person.'

collections, the ones you do for other people, the endless travel – and they might fear the same fate for you. What immunizes you to the pressures that seemed so destructive to them? You said, 'It's not about me, it's them.' But you're still putting in the hours. How do you sustain that? Plus your relationship with Craig?
When I work with designers, I will see them suffering. However, my workload is much greater than theirs. They have no concept.

But presumably they are aware that you are also working for Rei Kawakubo or Walter Van Beirendonck or whoever at the same time.
I'm not sure that they are particularly aware, really, because their world is all about them.

You have talked about the enormous ego required to run a fashion house, but you still seem to be naturally collaborative. You also said you have no ambition. Would you say that if there is no ambition then there can be no ego?
I remember long ago, there had been some in-fighting in the Galliano studio and Steven Robinson gathered everyone around and said, 'Look, behave yourselves, look at Stephen Jones. When he comes here, he works with us and has no ego, he has no point to prove.' And I said, 'I'm sorry, Steven, but you are wrong.' He said, 'Why? That is how you are.' And I said, 'I have an ego so big that I have to have my own company in London, so I can escape all this and be somewhere that *I* make the decisions.'

to be false,' and I said, 'But it's fashion. All fashion is this fabulous lie, it's about not telling the truth.' And I lost him at that point.

Forever?
Yeah, I think so. RuPaul said we're all born naked and the rest is drag. Though I think Quentin Crisp said that first.

Didn't John Galliano also say that a hat is an alibi? I think that's the best line.
A hat *is* an alibi. A hat really is magical and has more effect on the wearer than anything else you can possibly wear because it is so completely transformative. It is this wonderful costume we make up and put on. The reason it is so charming is that you can take it off and put it back on. And you can't do that

'I think people wear hats now because they perceive it to be a fashion item in the way that 15 years ago, they saw handbags as being *the* fashion items.'

And your faith in human nature is unshaken by your constant exposure to all this self-centeredness and rampant ego?
Don't forget talent! The universe hates an imbalance, so the more extraordinary the talent, the more extreme its counterbalance. To experience one extreme, you have to unfortunately experience the other. That is the way the dice are set. No pearl without a piece of grit. And, as I said, it's because I could walk away. I think it is because I am interested in them. You know it is quite fascinating to try and find out what makes Marc Jacobs or Rei Kawakubo tick. Because I am independent, I have always been fascinated by being part of something as well. You know, I'm apart but it is quite nice to dip in and be part of something.

Still, in a collaborative environment, you are not the queen bee fighting for your place in the sun.
I am fascinated by what makes those people tick. I know what I like, but it is great to have that challenged in a different flavour.

In a way, it is almost like you are an actor then. You can do all of that because you become a different person.
Yes. It is all an act, because it is all a lie. Fashion is a fabulous lie.

And a hat is absolutely anything you put on your head. There is something so basic about that.
I shall never forget that was what drove Raf and me apart, because I was going to do the hats and I said, 'Yes, I can do that,' and he said, 'But I don't want it

with clothing because it takes effort. There are sleeves. And it has to fit.

I read somewhere that the Queen's clothing is almost like stripper's clothing because it has to break away so she can get in and out of things really quickly. But I wanted to pitch another Stephen Jones quote at you. You said photography makes hats believable. That's kind of an extension of the idea of designing hats for museum shows. More important than you designing the hat is someone taking a photo of someone wearing that hat.
Next year I am curating an exhibition in Granville about Christian Dior hats,[47] and what is so fascinating is seeing the passage of the hat from Monsieur Dior to Marc Bohan and beyond.[48] In the time of Monsieur Dior, the hat was a

continuation of the silhouette. It was just another item of clothing, like putting on a blouse to go with a skirt, or a belt to go with a coat. At the time of the New Look in 1947, Monsieur Dior knew he was making this pretty historic statement and the hat was part of a complete look, a part of reality. Saint Laurent, on the other hand, introduced hats as a fantasy, which is why he did masks and toques, and things that were fashionable in a particular moment. So it is interesting with Marc Bohan coming through in the 1960s because we had moved away from *wearing* hats by then, but the hat had become a great graphic tool, to add shadow on the face, for example. The hat functioned in an image just like when you go to a sideshow at a fair, you're not going to get shoes to put on but there's a hat which

a hat. It's so quick and immediate and confrontational.

Do you think there is a new hat consciousness?
I think there is a hat consciousness which morphs all the time between countries, between the ages of people wearing them. I think people wear hats now because they perceive it to be a fashion item in the way that 15 years ago, they saw handbags as being *the* fashion items. Hats are an extension of that experience.

Do you know that for a fact, from your business?
I think certainly the big labels I work with, they know that. I think also with a hat there is an originality that handbags don't have. An independence, an

So the thing you have to do is, don't do something she is going to expect, don't do the thing you think she is going to like, because automatically she will not like it. If I do work with her on a collection, what she wants is the salt in the sweet or the sweetness in the salt. She just wants the opposite, or the thing you didn't dream of.

What always strikes me is the comparative restraint of the work you do with her. It's a real embodiment of the concept behind your exhibition *Stephen Jones & The Accent of Fashion*.[49]
I once asked Adrian [Joffe], 'Why does she come to me to make hats?' and he said, 'Because she wanted an English gentleman to make some hats with her.' Working with Walter is completely different. He wants you to follow his lead

'You can put on Kim Kardashian face-sculpting make-up for a transformative effect – or you could just put on a hat. It's so quick and immediate.'

will make you look like a policeman or a nurse. The hat became an immediate and understandable costume, to anyone anywhere in the world.

Are you saying that the hat doesn't exist as a reality? Surely, you've restored the realness.
That's absolutely where my hats originally came from. They were made for people to look good in when they were out dancing in nightclubs. They weren't about posing on a catwalk. Then I started doing hats for fashion shows and that was very different. But I think the wonderful thing about a hat is that it always makes a disassociation from reality – the reality of how we actually look. You could put Kim Kardashian face-sculpting make-up on for a transformative effect – or you could just put on

originality, and some fun. So hats are my alibi.

It suggests you are getting away with something.
Not being *me*, being *that other person*. I can be transformed by putting this thing on my head. And that is its magic.

I mentioned Rei Kawakubo and Walter Van Beirendonck. They work in such a different world from those other designers we've been talking about that it's hard to imagine you're dealing with the same situation.
I work with Rei in many ways, often not for runway shows. There's fragrance, and Dover Street Market and different projects for the brand Comme des Garçons. Rei gives you carte blanche until she doesn't like what you've done.

and is very unsettled if something different from what he expects is thrown into the pot. But that is what I do – I try and make him feel uncomfortable.

I think your hats for him are some of the greatest things you have ever made.
I love those hats, but it is somehow about the clash as well. Maybe that is also what it is about Rei. It is a different conversation with everybody.

So, you thrive on the compatibility *and* the conflict?
The conflict *is* the compatibility, and the compatibility *is* the conflict. And I sort of know where I stand because I am very much aware that I am part of them. But why do they want to be part of me? It is a very interesting cross-flow. They could get hats from anybody...

Someone – maybe it was you – once said that if every other country has a national dress that they trot out for special occasions, then England's is the hat.
Totally. If people think of a British person, they probably think of the Queen. During the day, she is wearing a bright yellow or pink hat, and for ceremonial events, she is wearing a crown. The royal hat. The cartoon Englishman wears a bowler or a flat cap, or maybe a busby.

The hat is the national signifier.
Yes. But what is so wonderful now for me about hat-making has been having a huge diversity – modern word – because it is great to make a formal hat or a baseball cap, a hat for a tall person, a small person, a romantic person. It's that difference which is interesting. If I said, 'Oh yeah, all hats have to be this colour or this shape this season', how dull is that? I am not on a mission to change the world. I don't think I am even on a mission to find the right hat for the right person. It is just that by wearing a hat, people are going to have a good time. No greater purpose than that. And I think that goes for fashion as well.

So, by those tokens – diversity, transformation, pleasure – there is nothing more contemporary than a hat.
Yes, because a hat can be anything. I understand that within the fashion world, there is a past, present and future, though with the Internet and social media it's all the same thing, a big quagmire, depending on how you perceive it. But the great thing about hats is that there is no past, present and future. They are timeless. I mean, if you want to wear a 1940s hat or a futuristic hat or a gladiator helmet: will people say you are old-fashioned because of that? Are they having a humour bypass, or *what*?

Do you think that is your legacy then? That the world sees hats through the eyes of Stephen Jones.
I don't know. What is my legacy? He came, he saw, he made a hat.

1. *Stingray* (1964-1965) and *Thunderbirds* (1965-1966) were hit TV series created by married couple Gerry and Sylvia Anderson that used marionette puppetry to tell the stories of two international organizations. In *Stingray*, the World Aquanaut Security Patrol (WASP) travelled the oceans in a nuclear-powered submarine, while in *Thunderbirds*, International Rescue provided emergency services with land, sea, air and space capabilities.

2. Jeremy Healy is a British DJ and a founder of 1980s pop group Haysi Fantayzee, whose 1982 song 'John Wayne Is Big Leggy' reached number four in the Swiss charts. Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward was the only female character on *Thunderbirds*. An aristocratic fashion lover and undercover agent she was based on the show's co-creator, Sylvia Anderson.

3. *Thunderbirds* was a 2004 live-action version of the classic puppet series. Jones' hats were worn by Sophia Myles who played Lady Penelope.

4. American fashion historian, curator and director of the Museum at FIT, Valerie Steele has featured Jones' work in a number of exhibitions she has curated.

5. Lola Hats was founded by Lola Ehrlich, a Dutch-born, Paris-raised, New York-based designer who, she says, 'never went to school'.

6. Pharrell Williams was criticized for wearing a Native American eagle-feather headdress on the July 2014 cover of *Elle UK*.

7. Bevis Hiller is a British historian and critic. The official biographer of British poet Sir John Betjeman, Hiller is notorious for having written a fake letter that was included in a rival biography of the poet by A.N. Wilson. The letter contained an acrostic that read: 'A.N. Wilson is a shit.'

8. Until 1991, the final three years at British schools were called upper fifth, lower sixth and upper sixth.

9. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a hooker as: 'The player in the middle of the front row of the scrum, who tries to hook the ball.'

10. Yes was a prog-rock band first formed in 1968, whose greatest success was the 1983 international smash 'Owner of a Lonely Heart'. Prog-rock supergroup Emerson, Lake & Palmer's second live concert was in front of 600,000 people at the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival; it featured the debut of the group's now-classic 34-minute version of Modest Mussorgsky's 1874 piano suite *Pictures at an Exhibition*. It climaxed with the firing of cannons.

11. Little information can be found about this restaurant, although a restaurant called Sands did exist on New Bond Street at the time, as seen in a February 1963 photograph in the Getty Images archive.

12. Created by Sidney Sheldon, *I Dream of Jeannie* starred Barbara Eden as a 2,000-year-old genie discovered by a grumpy astronaut played by Larry Hagman. The two characters eventually married, but their union saw the ratings drop and the show was cancelled in 1970 after five seasons.

13. Soho Market was an open-air market at the end of Gerrard Street in London's Chinatown; it was replaced by a multi-storey car park in the 1980s.

14. The Sex Pistols played High Wycombe Technical Institute on February 20, 1976. A review of the gig published in the *Bucks Free Press Midweek* reported: 'A four man group going by the strange name of the Sex Pistols stole the show at the Rag Ball on Friday. It wasn't that they were musically good – they just refused to stop playing.'

15. *Spitting Image* was a satirical and topical TV show featuring sketches performed using caricatural latex puppets. Created by Peter Fluck and Roger Law, it ran for 19 seasons between 1984 and 1996.

16. American performance artist and musician Wayne County (né Wayne Rogers) formed Wayne County & the Electric Chairs after moving to London in 1977. A key band in the first wave of punk, it was known for its 'raunch'n'roll' trash aesthetic and wild shows. The band's songs include 'Cream in My Jeans' and 'Fuck Off' (sample lyrics: 'If you don't want to fuck me, / Fuck off.') County moved to Berlin in 1979, emerging later that year as a woman called Jayne County. She moved back to the US in 1983 and continued to produce music, most recently a 2017 anti-animal experiment song entitled 'Leave My Pussy Alone'.

17. Since opening in 1964, the 100 Club on Oxford Street, London, has hosted concerts by the best-known musicians and bands of successive generations: from Muddy Waters to the Who to the Sex Pistols to Oasis to Blood Orange, as well as Pink Parts.

18. Duggie Fields is a British pop artist born in 1945. He began at Chelsea School of Art in 1964 and became known for his pop-art influenced figuration.By the mid-1970s he had become a proto-post-modernist. Luciana Martinez was known for her colourful and highly varied painting style and as a muse to artists including Derek Jarman (she appears in his film *Jubilee*) and Duggie Fields. According to Andrew Logan, she was from an aristocratic Neapolitan family descended from Spanish pirates. She died of meningitis aged 48.

19. Launched in 1960, *Honey* was a magazine for young women most popular in the 1960s and 1970s. It published early images by now-celebrated photographers including Terence Donovan, Don McCullin and David Bailey. *Honey* closed in May 1986.

20. The Blitz Kids were a group of trendy young men and women, including Jones, Boy George, Midge Ure, Stephen Linard, and Sade, who attended Steve Strange (later of Visage) and Rusty Egan's Tuesday club night in 1979 and 1980. It began in a bar called Billy's in Soho, later moved to the Blitz nightclub in Covent Garden, and was celebrated for its strict, yet flamboyant dress code.

21. Described by the BBC as a 'bizarre combination of an extremely rude, very camp Christmas panto and a pansexual beauty pageant with wildly improbable contestants', Alternative Miss World first took place in Andrew Logan's studio in north London in 1972. The second was filmed by Derek Jarman and attended by Zandra Rhodes, Ossie Clark, David Bailey, and Angie Bowie. (Her husband David had been refused entry.) The most recent – the 14th – was held at the Globe Theatre, London, in October 2018.

22. Known as 'London's Studio 54', the Embassy on Old Bond Street opened in 1978. Despite being a disco club, it became popular with the New Romantics, including Steve Strange, Spandau Ballet and Rusty Egan.

23. *Death in Venice* is a 1971 film directed by Luchino Visconti and based upon Thomas Mann's novel. It starred Dirk Bogarde as an ailing composer who becomes fixated on an androgynous sailor-suited teenage boy, Tadzio, played by Björn Andrésen.

24. The Vortex was a punk club night hosted at the Crackers nightclub on Wardour Street. The first event, held on July 4, 1977, featured the Buzzcocks, the Fall, John Cooper Clarke, and the Heartbreakers. John Miller, one of the promoters of Vortex, was later involved in a botched 1981 attempt to kidnap train robber and fugitive Ronnie Biggs from Brazil and return him to Britain. The attempt failed when the gang lost control of the escape yacht off Barbados.

25. The Winter of Discontent was the name given to a wave of strikes that took place through the winter of 1978-1979 in the UK. The strikes began in Ford car factories and spread to the public sector, leaving rubbish uncollected – famously filling Leicester Square in London – and bodies unburied when gravediggers stopped work. It is widely credited with leading to the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party in May 1979.

26. Opened in 1978, Peppermint Park was originally an ice-cream parlour on Upper Saint Martin's Lane before becoming a pastel-pink-and-green cocktail bar and diner. It became infamous when Paul and Linda McCartney hosted a party there to celebrate their purchase of the publishing rights to Buddy Holly's catalogue. The Who's drummer Keith Moon attended the event, which took place on September 2, 1978, before returning home and dying later the same night. The London outpost of New York restaurant Joe Allen opened in Covent Garden, London, in 1977.

27. Roxy Music's second album *For Your Pleasure* was released on March 23, 1973, and was the band's last to feature Brian Eno. The cover image of Amanda Lear in a skintight leather dress holding a panther on a lead was art directed by legendary British fashion designer Antony Price and photographed by Karl Stoecker.

28. 'Ladytron' was track two on Roxy Music's eponymous debut album. It does not appear to have been released a single at the time, so the flip side Jones mentions may be something from the B-side of the album.

29. 'London-born David Shilling now lives and works in the Principality of Monaco creating massive steel sculpture and his always one-of-a-kind hats for which he is renowned,' says www.davidshilling.com. 'His hats are the most expensive in the world and therefore the most exclusive. He is the acknowledged founding father of modern millinery.'

30. Peter Lewis-Crown spent his entire professional career as a designer at and later owner of British couture house Lachasse; he also taught at Saint Martin's. Jones, John Galliano and Hamish Bowles all apprenticed at the house, which closed in 2006.

31. Shirley Hex was head of the millinery department at Lachasse, a mentor to both Stephen Jones and Philip Treacy, and milliner to the Queen, the Queen Mother and Princess Diana.

32. Jewellery designer Dinny Hall founded her eponymous company in 1985. John Maybury is a filmmaker and artist. Cerith Wyn Evans is an artist, sculptor and filmmaker.

33. Stephen Linard created two legendary menswear collections at Saint Martin's in 1980 and 1981. *Neon Gothic* and *Reluctant Émigrés* both fitted into the burgeoning New Wave zeitgeist. He later created his own label, designed clothes for musicians including David Bowie, Fun Boy 3 and the Pet Shop Boys, and moved to Japan before returning to London

34. Madame Grès was born Germaine Émilie Krebs in Paris in 1903. Known for her ability to drape fabrics into dresses, sometimes using up to 20 metres of fabric, she created Grès in 1942 and, apart from a brief Nazi-enforced pause in 1944, continued designing until 1988. She died in 1993.

35. Sybille de Saint Phalle has two famous aunts: Madame Grès and artist Niki de Saint Phalle. Studio director for Stephen Jones and later for John Galliano, she now works as a freelance casting director and stylist.

36. P.X. – which was short for Par Excellence – first opened in James Street, near Covent Garden, in September 1978, with, according to legend, shop-fittings taken from the recently closed offices of MI5 in Curzon Street. The shop became the fashion ground zero for the New Romantic movement.

37. Béatrice Paul left Montana after 20 years in early December 1994. She told *WWD* that it was because she and Claude Montana 'were not in agreement about the future of fashion'.

38. Steven Robinson was the head of studio for Christian Dior and Galliano until his death in 2007 aged 38.

39. *Princess Lucretia*, Galliano's Spring/Summer 1994 collection, told the story of a Russian princess taking a journey to discover her true self.

40. Bill Gaytten worked with Galliano for 23 years and replaced him at both Dior and John Galliano after Galliano's dismissal in April 2011.

41. The ban on using feathers from wild birds was introduced in 1(2)*(a)* of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

42. Luton's place as a centre of millinery is reflected in the nickname of the town's football team: the Hatters.

43. For his Spring/Summer 1998 Christian Dior couture show, John Galliano presented a lavish collection inspired by Marchesa Casati at the Opéra Garnier in Paris. Tim Blanks has always loved the show: 'It was like every single drug experience that everyone's ever had in their whole life concentrated into 10 minutes.'

44. Raf Simons replaced Bill Gaytten at Dior in April 2012.

45. The Autumn/Winter 2006-2007 Christian Dior haute-couture show had a theme of armour and the Italian Renaissance and was inspired by Joan of Arc, Britannia and *Blade Runner*.

46. Spring/Summer 1985.

47. Jones' exhibition about Dior's hats will take place at the Musée Christian Dior, which is housed in Dior's childhood home in Granville, Normandy.

48. Marc Bohan took over at Dior after Yves Saint Laurent was conscripted and remained at the house until 1989.

49. *Stephen Jones & the Accent of Fashion* was organized at MoMu in Antwerp to celebrate Jones' 30 years in fashion in 2011. 2010.

Epilogue

In the course of Tim Blanks' conversation with Stephen Jones, Jones asked himself a question about his collaborators. In the circumstances, it was rhetorical, but we decided to make it real, and pose it to them.

'I am very much aware that I am part of you, but why do you want to be part of me?'

'Because you were there at the beginning and therefore are as old as us. Because people like us have to stick together, otherwise it gets too lonely. And finally, because you're the greatest.'
Rei Kawakubo

'Because, from the first day, it felt like destiny. We always had this built-in history, crazy days with Victoria Fernandez and the BodyMap kids, and strong memories of Tokyo where we met in the 1980s when there was that Fashion Quartet thing. I was with Stephen Sprouse, and you were with BodyMap and Rifat. It was the first time I knew of a strong design presence in the millinery world, Mr. John aside. And you were one of the creative people I met back then who made me think that if one day I was in position to work with fill-in-the-blank, it would be you. On a deeply emotional level, I knew, "This will be right." And it was from the very beginning, speaking the same language, completing each other's stories, me painting a picture with words, you chiming in with a piece of fabric on the head. In an instant, we got each other.'
Marc Jacobs

'Because you are a special travel companion from whom I have learned the secrets of a unique art. You always said that making hats is an "aesthetic and physical adventure" because it is a territory where rules do not exist. There is only creativity, and the possibility of translating it into objects. Together we discuss different types of femininity, both past and contemporary. We think about the female face and the best way it might be enhanced by a hat, and above all, we imagine the woman who hides beneath the veil or who, in a self-assertive manner, proudly wears the leather beret. I adore hats, which for me complement and accentuate every outfit. Yours have become an indispensable element in completing my vision.'
Maria Grazia Chiuri

'Because you're an encyclopaedia of Dior. And because you love London subcultures and you have a general knowledge that puts anyone else to shame. I find it amazing that you are all over the world all the time and yet you are so calm and cool in any situation. People always think we are related – I guess somehow we are.'
Kim Jones

'Because you are a true designer who appreciates the art of the most fruitful collaborations. I want to be part of you for so many reasons. The most important one is your sensitive and intellectual approach to fashion.'
Thom Browne

'Because it is wonderful to be part of you! I knew your work in the shop on Endell Street and when I phoned you to work on my *Avatar* collection in 1997, you were very kind. You said you were interested to work for W.&L.T. because it was so different from everyone else. I had the idea to create 120 hats as styling for the show. That collaboration was the first of many. It always feels so right to explain my ideas to you. You always ask hundreds of questions to get inside my head and create the perfect hats for each collection. And that feels *wonderful*!'
Walter Van Beirendonck

'Because I admire your kindness and sweetness, which are just two of the many formidable traits that, when coupled with your insane talent and that beautiful whimsical mind of yours, irresistibly drew me to you.'
Jeremy Scott

'Because, even before I started my journey in this industry, I looked to you for sheer creative inspiration. And now, to be able to work on ideas with you is a dream come true. I am incredibly grateful for your support.'
Matty Bovan

'Because in you, I have found a person who not only believes anything is possible, but who can actually realize anything. There really is no limit to what you can do. In every idea – every shape, trim, even in construction – there's the depth of a fashion historian, a depth that I've really only experienced with you. You can take *any* idea and put it into a historical context. That adds layers and layers to the way we work, and often to how I think about the collection at hand. But there's not only depth, there's also grace. The way you move, the way you enter a restaurant, take off your coat – it's all grace.'
Daniel Roseberry

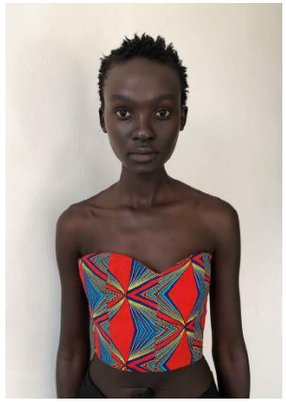
'Because your cultural reference points, your sense of play, your overwhelming *fabulousness* captivated me when I first came across you in *The Face* and *i-D* and *BLITZ* in an HMV record store in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1985. You helped to propel me into the orbit of what was then Saint Martin's School of Art. I jumped at the chance to work with you. I was nervous you'd just tell me to naff off, but thankfully you didn't, and our relationship is one that I cherish both professionally and personally.'
Giles Deacon

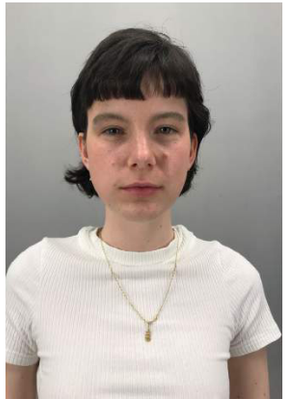
Creative partner to Juergen Teller: Dovile Drizyte. Photography assistant: Karin Xiao. Post Production: Catalin Plesa @ Quickfix Retouch.

‘People no longer just accept the boring athletic type.’

When you want a different model, go to Midland.

By Jonathan Wingfield
Portrait by Ethan James Green





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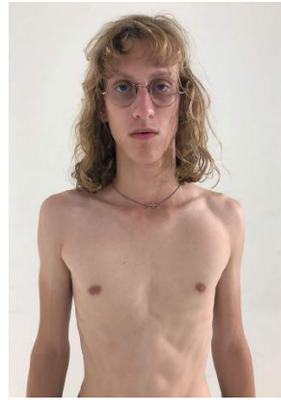
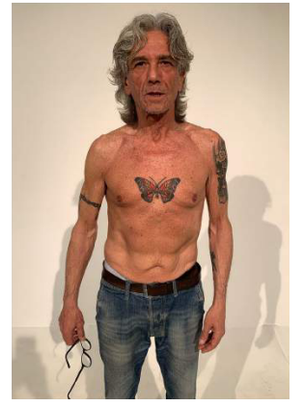
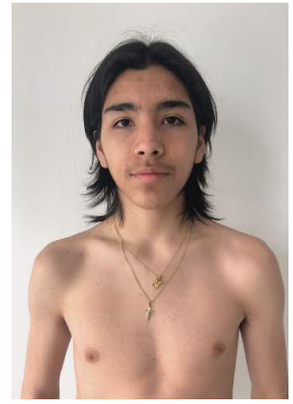
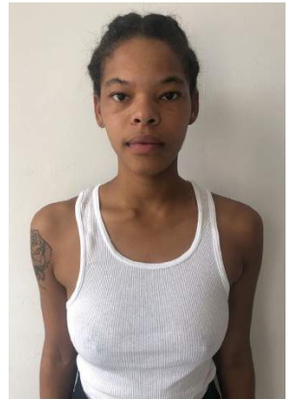


SAINTS
ATTACK
FOOTBALL

In September 2018, New York brand Vaquera's show featured a young man galumphing down the catwalk looking like he'd escaped from a low-budget horror movie. Walter Pearce's zombie walk became a sensation and an instant symbol of one of the more radical changes the industry has recently undergone: fashion is changing its face, literally. Many would point to Alessandro Michele's arrival at Gucci in 2015 as a turning point – his shows and ad campaigns often assembling a joyful collective of waifs and strays, both culturally and physically oceans away from the models presented by his more conventionally minded, 'sex sells' Gucci predecessors – but scratch the surface and the change has been happening in pockets of the industry all over. *Ultra*-real casting has become ultra-real.

'The first casting job I ever did just entailed going out and finding the most bizarre-looking people to feature in these weird satirical shoots.'

At the heart of this movement is Midland, a casting and management agency, founded in 2016 by Walter Pearce himself and Rachel Chandler, which emerged from New York's art-fashion-music-hybrid scene centred around Shayne Olivier's Hood by Air downtown collective-cum-brand. They have since established a client base across the fashion world that includes Marni, Comme des Garçons, Fenty, Telfar, Eckhaus Latta, and, since 2017, Gucci, where Midland now has a hand in casting its own 'discoveries' alongside the likes of Iggy Pop, Sienna Miller, and indeed, Walter Pearce himself (in cute displays of public affection with his now real-life girlfriend, Gucci mainstay Unia Pakhomova). This change in the faces of fashion has sometimes been dismissed as little more than the extreme and the odd, but when objectively viewed, it's another stage in the wider ambition of bringing more diversity into the industry. By turning the spotlight on people from a greater variety of backgrounds in a greater range of shapes and sizes, both young and old, the classically fashion-beautiful and the more unconventional, Chandler and Pearce are driving change and challenging long-held preconceptions about what constitutes 'normal'. More than ever, casting is becoming about character – ours for starters.

Let's start with your respective back stories. Rachel, how did you start out?
Rachel Chandler: I was 18 when I moved to New York, working first as a photo assistant, then shooting pictures myself. I was totally miserable. Poor Walter has heard me say this so many times: I really didn't like shooting fashion pictures, although there was something about it that kept drawing me back. I was always looking for people to shoot, and that's how casting came my way. I just started finding my own people. Then, because I was a member of the fashion community, different designers started asking me for casting help. They had seen the women in my shoots and were like, 'They're interesting, would you help us on a show?'

So, you were already casting off the beaten track from the start.
Rachel: I was basically doing street casting. We're talking four to six years ago: Instagram existed, but it wouldn't have occurred to me to use it that way – approaching someone via DM – so it was people from the street or people in my life. People I remembered from school or the girl who works in the local coffee shop. I'm quite outgoing, so it came naturally to seek people out.

An extension of your social interactions.
Walter Pearce: Yes, and she was a big DJ as well. That played a part.
Rachel: I was DJing in New York at the Beatrice Inn. At one point, I had two nights a week there. So I was meeting a lot of people because of that, while during the day I was shooting for magazines like *Dazed*, *Purple* and *Double*.

When you look back at your photography, was it more an exercise in documenting the casting?
Rachel: If I was to dig out those shoots, I think you could identify my casting eye from the beginning, for sure. Even if I wouldn't be happy with the photographic aspect.

And what's your story, Walter?
Walter: I was born here in the city and then I grew up upstate. I would take the train multiple times a week into the city to do internships. When I was 14 or 15, I interned for *DIS* magazine, which is more of an art platform these days; they recently curated the Berlin Biennale. They did all these very tongue-in-cheek fashion shoots. They were the coolest thing to me at the time. The first casting job I ever did was for them, going out and finding the most bizarre looking people to be in their weird satirical shoots.

Were they operating within the fashion industry at the time?

Walter: They were, in a way, because they were friends with designers like Telfar and Shayne [Oliver] from Hood by Air. So, they would do collaborations with them. The whole point was that it was half-kidding and half-serious. Through them, the following year, I interned for Hood by Air. Shayne and Ian [Isiah] liked me, and they had me start street-casting for them. I was so bad at it to start with.

What made you bad?
Walter: I was thinking more about what they would want, rather than what I would want. You learn quickly what your eye is, but it takes a while. I was in charge of casting the Hood by Air show when I was 18, while Rachel was in charge of casting other stuff for them, too. Then, the following year, I did it all by myself. Rachel and I were working on it together, but didn't know each other. Rachel has a very strong taste in women, which they liked. Plus, I didn't even know how to talk to [model] agencies; I had only done street casting, so it would have been literally impossible for me to formally cast a show at that time.
Rachel: I think they felt that the women weren't polished enough. So that was when I had Daiane Conterato open the show – she is one of Dries' muses and a much more polished kind of model. Her agent, who was petrified, came with her to the show, to make sure it wasn't too weird. Daiane came out in a fur coat with natural hair and make-up, and her agent hugged me after the show and was like, 'Phew, there's no weird shit going on!' Hood By Air never did anything in the standard way. Shayne just wanted everyone's ideas; he didn't really care where they came from.
Walter: I think there was a transitional period, where there was a casting director, and then there wasn't, and then there were like nine of us.
Rachel: When Shayne did Helmut Lang, Walter worked on that with Samuel Ellis.

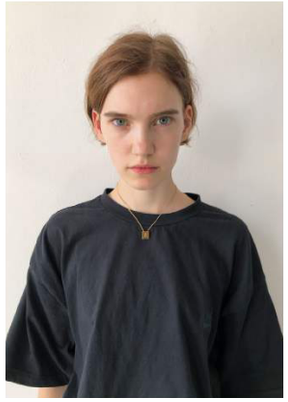
Walter, did you see casting as the start of a career, a role that you could define yourself by?
Walter: Being 19, I didn't even know it was a job. It certainly took me a long time to see it as a career. I still considered myself a photographer at that time. I'd been to FIT and done photography for a year, then I entered an honours programme, but dropped out – or got thrown out, depending on who you ask.
Rachel: I have this picture of Walter in my phone from 2015. I was living near FIT and I was driving by. Walter was running in the street and I was like, 'Oh, it's the kid from Hood by Air.' So I stopped and wound down my passenger window to take a picture of him. At that time, we were both fully engaged with Hood by Air, but we just had such different lives. We are almost 10 years apart.

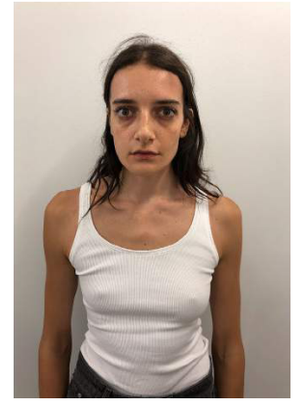
What was the process of you guys coming together and starting Midland?
Rachel: I just asked him if he could do it with me. We started Midland in September 2016. Walter was working for Hood by Air that year by himself. And at that time I was getting asked more and more by other designers to help out.
Walter: And I was getting asked by people to do editorials. But I didn't even know what that meant.

All linked to the Hood by Air scene?
Walter: Yes, friends with the brand, and people who liked that whole scene were asking me to street cast.
Rachel: Around that time, Francisco Costa asked me to help cast for Calvin Klein. That was a moment for me when I realized this was something that's untapped. Shayne is my peer, so for him to value my eye was flattering and exciting. But then to have somebody who is not in my social circle ask me to do it, made me think that I wasn't fully realizing my capabilities with this. Another thing that was happening was that the people Walter and I found for Hood by Air were getting signed by model agencies.

'People we'd found felt model agencies were taking them on because they wanted to seem cool. They'd do one big campaign then never work again.'

How did that make you feel? Given that you had discovered them.
Rachel: We were happy for them, but I was also thinking, 'Maybe if the agencies are signing them, there is something here from a financial standpoint.' So, I called Walter one day, and I was literally half joking, but I said, 'Shall we start a modelling agency together?'
Walter: I was in my basement at the time, in Bed-Stuy! I just said, 'Sure!'
Rachel: The casting, I think, we both viewed as more of a creative thing. But we decided that we would also start representing people we were finding. I knew enough about fees and I thought we could do it. What I also noticed was that a lot of the people we knew who got signed, felt like the agencies were taking them on because they wanted to be cool. When they arrived at the agency,





they would do one big flashy campaign and then never work again. So, the idea behind Midland is that if we take you on as a talent, there are no strings attached. No financial strings either side: we don't do cards; we don't do books. If there is someone on the street who wants to model, we can just put them on the website and see what happens.

What generally happens?
Rachel: We have existed for three years and I'd say we now have half a dozen people who are living off modelling, working enough to pay rent in New York. That is really cool. As for the casting side, I don't think either of us expected it to take off the way it has, but when we named the agency, we consciously named it Midland Management and Casting, with the idea we would do both.

approached understand the distinction between the Midland offer and that of other more conventional model agencies?
Rachel: Well, what I saw three years ago with them getting signed and doing nothing is happening less now. The big agencies are getting better at cultivating that type of model, but I still think that Midland is a great place for people who maybe don't even want to model that much. Like if you are a musician and you don't want to be told every day to go to a casting, then it's ideal.
Walter: A lot of these kids are just as happy working with smaller brands like Telfar that don't even pay that much, because they feel like it is fun and they become part of a cool community. They are not concerned with being booked for some huge campaign.

Walter: I kept fucking up and then doing something really good. Doing really good work and then fucking up again. Sleeping through a giant meeting. People kind of put up with it, but were definitely on the edge of their seats. Then I just pulled it together.

What prompted that?
Walter: It was just natural. Going out is for idiots. Most parties are stupid and I now like working better than going out. I'm lucky I learned that when I was 22.
Rachel: We have a good thing between us and obviously it is a bit of marriage. There were times when I was like, 'Gosh, I wish we were flying to Milan separately, and not in little seats next to one another again.' But I think 90% of the time we have figured out how to get the best out of each other.

'Walter's dad said the kids we cast are the type who'd have got the shit beat out of them at his school in Midland, Texas. So it was the perfect name.'

How did you come up with the name?
Walter: It's named after the city in Texas where my dad lived. It's the shittiest city ever.
Rachel: I lived in the Midlands, in England, when I was a kid. I think the Midlands in England in the mid-1990s and Midland in Texas might be comparable in their shittiness.
Walter: It's funny because it sounds really pretty, but it was where [ex-president George W.] Bush grew up.
Rachel: [To Walter] You were really struggling with the name, then your dad said that the kind of kids we were casting were the kids who would have got the shit beat out of them if they were at his school in Midland, Texas. At that point, I knew it was the perfect name.

Did the aspiring models who you

What were the practical realities of the casting work really taking off for you both?
Walter: I was getting stuff in my inbox that I couldn't handle. Also, at this point, clients would be like, 'OK, we'll pay you $3,000 for global usage', and I didn't know what any of that meant.
Rachel: When we started Midland, our agent Sofie [Geradin] helped because – and I don't want to offend Walter here – he was young; he was a bit of a wild card. Sofie saw how talented he was, but she also saw how much he was going out. I think she imagined how we could turn that into something, she just wasn't sure what. When I came along and we joined up, I was more established in the industry already in my own way. So, when we joined together, Sofie saw that as something she could invest in.

Is there a natural division of the work between you?
Rachel: For the casting work, people want both of us together.
Walter: I do Telfar alone because I've been doing it for five years, but pretty much everything else we do together.
Rachel: When we do Marni, we sit there together from the first day to the last. Because there is something about the combination of the two of us that people want, not just one or the other. The reason it works is that I understand Walter's eye and he understands mine, so if we get a job where it's clearly one person over another, then one will take the lead and the other will be there to support.

How do you define a Midland model?
Walter: Every client is different. We get hired for our eyes. We are quite

bespoke in a hipster kind of way, like we don't take on more clients than we think we could handle. The reason you hire some casting directors is because you get a certain type of girl, but with us you get something completely different, based entirely on your brand identity or whatever your project is.
Rachel: I mean, it is harder for us. There is an infrastructure between agents that exists; like an agent will say, 'Well, you used her for this, why not for that?'
Walter: And we'll be like, 'Because she was right for that and not for this.' Which isn't what they want to hear. It is getting easier though, because our client list has expanded a lot. We used to have two clients agents would get excited about, while the others were all a bit cooler and younger.
Rachel: People are getting used to how

later he was with us. He ended up doing a huge campaign.

Instagram makes your extended social circle infinitely larger.
Walter: The social circle is never ending. To be honest, I don't really look for people on Instagram to cast; if anything, if I'm travelling to a place where I am doing casting, I might announce, 'Casting in Paris – DM me your picture.' I sometimes dig around online, but it is less productive. Instagram can be both an interesting tool and a distraction.
Rachel: We never count on it for a job; if we get someone from there then it is great. Like a bonus.
Walter: There *are* cool guys on there.

Walter, you went to Chengdu with stylist Vanessa Reid and cast local people

Rachel: Both, Spanish and some students living there. With editorial projects, we get to flex a little more, because you're not dealing with issues of fit, or whether people can walk on the runway. We find all these people in places like Madrid, and if they don't get selected for advertising, they can still be great in editorial contexts. Photographers are now starting to know who we are so we can send these kids to shoot with them.

What other differences for you are there between casting for editorial, for clients, for shows, or for campaigns?
Rachel: Shows are the most standalone, because the people we cast need to fit the samples.
Walter: Then again, Vaquera, for example, they don't care about sizes because they are like punk rockers. Marni is the

'Some casting directors are hired to get a certain type of girl, but with us you get something different, based entirely on whatever your project is.'

we work and that our approach actually respects individuals above all else.
Walter: That, and they know we're not going to change our minds!

How often are you walking along the street and see someone and think, 'I've got to stop them'?
Walter: It happens. You just know right away. You do it without thinking about it. It's the same as if I see someone randomly on Instagram. One evening, after I'd been out to dinner, I got back pretty drunk, and was on Instagram Stories; this girl I barely know posted this thing, which I screenshot, because this interesting-looking boy was in it, and I circled him in red, so when I woke up I would remember. When I saw the picture the following day, I was like, 'Wow, good call!' I texted the girl and two days

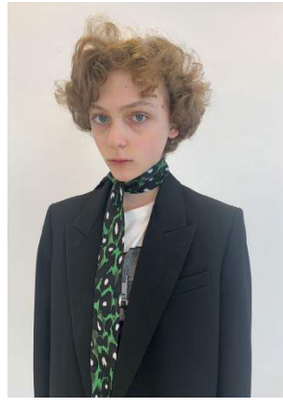
for a *System* shoot. The people you cast were obviously very specific to that location. Do you often go out on 'location-centric' trips?
Rachel: It is great when that happens for a client or a story, because then we have a clear focal point. We have done trips to European cities together. And we've done China and Japan, too.

Are there places that are disproportionately successful for you?
Walter: Yes, Madrid, but don't print that! Everyone will end up going there!
Rachel: We weren't expecting it at all. Not because we didn't think Madrid was hot. But it was just amazing.

Was it local Spanish people you were particularly drawn to, or internationals living in Madrid?

opposite: very tailored, so if we want to bring in some different shapes of people, it's easier if we present them way ahead of time. A few of our clients are willing to make the piece for the specific person.
Rachel: Walking on the runway is really scary; it's not for everyone. There is a level of professionalism required. The point of the show is not for people to leave and remember the weird way a person walked down the runway. They are there to see the show.

That said, Walter, you famously cast *yourself* in that Vaquera show, and then you walked like a zombie, becoming a headline-grabbing highlight of the season. Discuss!
Walter: The 'zombie walk' happened naturally as a collaboration between my



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CAPTAIN

casting work and the brand. It felt natural and fun with the clothes and the cast of characters we were putting in them. Things took off for Vaquera in terms of the brand having a signature walk.
Rachel: They put Walter's face on a sweatshirt once...

This season, Leon Dame produced another stand-out moment, strutting on the Margiela catwalk. Why, when some brands are spending millions orchestrating lavish 'visual spectacles', can something as modest (in budget) as walking on the catwalk capture people's attention so successfully?
Walter: Leon Dame's walk was cool and affected people for the same reasons as the Vaquera walk – a runway show is a performance, and the models are the stars. I do think they were kind of inspired by me though. I don't blame them; it's a cool walk.

How does the conversation between you guys and a runway client play out?
Rachel: In an ideal world, we get research. It could be anything, not necessarily people, but paintings. The best example would be the research we get from Chris Simmonds for Gucci. We also get extensive documents for Marni, from both Francesco [Risso], as well as Camilla [Nickerson, styling consultant], six weeks prior to the show. Sometimes we cast directly to the reference, other times it's just a starting point that takes unexpected turns along the way.

But the point is, you are responding to something tangible.
Rachel: Right, and then the more you work with a client, the more natural and intuitive it becomes as the seasons go by. I think both our brains work in a way that when we see a visual reference we immediately think of certain people. In doing that, we can help brands find their identities through casting.

Gucci's advertising casting often seems specific to the setting, the concept. They've become a client of yours more recently, right?
Rachel: The first thing we did with them was the Dapper Dan campaign, which was shot in July 2017. That was a specific context, because we cast in Harlem. Gucci will generally do specific reference casting and each campaign is a surprise. From a practical perspective, it's always different because the location changes.

And then there's Marni, whose brand identity you've really been instrumental in shaping through casting.
Rachel: For Marni, our eyes are open, but so are Francesco's, and his heart is open, too. He is willing to see anything and he doesn't care if it is wrong or where it comes from. I think that's the reason we get amazing results together.

What about Eckhaus Latta in New York? Those shows are one big exercise in casting.
Rachel: Eckhaus was the first brand after Hood by Air to ask me to take over their show casting. They had already established a strong direction in a very organic way, from within their own community. But they were doing everything themselves – designing the whole collection and then casting the show – so they needed someone to take on this role. I kept their friends and family in the fold and then introduced new people. Each season we build on the same formula: who are the new friends? What models would we like to work with? Plus, fans of the brand often reach out. Hari Nef is someone they worked with early on and this season she came back.

What makes Eckhaus such a good fit for Midland?
Rachel: It's genuine, so it looks and feels believable and sincere. Clients sometimes ask for us to create this sense of family with the casting, but if it's not real it will look silly. In those cases, we strongly discourage it. You can build a brand identity entirely through agency girls and boys, but sometimes people feel they need to jump on the street-casting train. We are just as excited and inspired to do an all-model casting, if it's right for the brand.

So much is changing in the industry and in society. Do you think the industry is genuinely receptive to very different types of models? Or is it just a moment, a fad?
Walter: I think the industry is genuinely more receptive. Sometimes, what is beautiful is beautiful to everybody; sometimes to just some people; sometimes it is only beautiful to me or to Rachel. But you can tell by the success of our business that people and brands are clearly more open to these types of more 'aggressive beauty'.
Rachel: We were just here to propose a point of view and the response has been a strong one, so it is indicative of something bigger than us. And I think wherever we are in the state of the world, it will certainly be hard to swing back from. If you look at it that way, it wouldn't undermine what we do to say it's a fad, nor would it be looking too much into it to say it's the new way forward. We provide a service that will be relevant in other eras.

If the 1980s were about athleticism, and the healthy-looking supermodel, what do you think the type of models that you guys are pushing into the mainstream says about the current era?
Walter: I think it is a reaction to the sociopolitical climate. I think that people are tired of the 'old days'. Kids don't think that is cool any more. If you are not a brand putting out imagery that is reflective of what the kids – the people who are buying clothes – want to see, then those people will look elsewhere. Because there are a million choices now. Even if there are not a million choices on billboards, there are a million choices on your phone. When you're living through the sociopolitical apocalypse that we currently are, and you have all these options to choose from, then you're going to choose the one you want. People are no longer going to accept the boring athletic type... *right*?
Rachel: And that doesn't only apply to kids. Marni is actually a good example of a brand that is *not* for kids. It's for women and for men. It is not for children. I think to have the reception we have had at Marni is really encouraging. To have both Comme des Garçons and Marni welcome us in proves that this isn't simply about youth. It's about all of us needing to see something more, something different.

Is that driving a broader consideration of what beauty is, both within and beyond the industry?
Rachel: Well, interestingly, we don't do much beauty work. We've never done a beauty campaign, although I think that would be fun to do.
Walter: The beauty industry is the final frontier. As beauty brands are owned by bigger entities, you have to break more barriers than just a creative director saying, 'Wow, she'd be cool in the campaign.'

Midland shapes what is new, unexpected and different, but are there models that you would like to see come back?
Rachel: Casting Deborah Shaw for Mugler was an amazing honour. I grew up reading all the magazines and knowing all the models, so if someone has the will to get back out there, I'm keen.
Walter: I think it's great to bring people back, but I've never idolized models like that. They are not the goddesses some people think they are.
Rachel: I actually think when girls idolize models, it's kind of fucked up.
Walter: The closest thing I've got to being obsessed with a model is my girlfriend [Unia Pakhomova]. She was my friend for five years, and I thought she was crazy looking. I tried to book her for Hood by Air from her local Russian agency when she was 16, but Hood by Air had no pull.
Rachel: And then they started dating a year ago…

…and you both got booked for the Gucci campaign.
Walter: She has been doing Gucci since Alessandro started, so basically her whole modelling career. And they just thought it was funny to have us both in the campaign.

Diversity and inclusivity are driving fashion's current dialogue, with casting heavily in the spotlight. Do you feel compelled to be part of that dialogue?
Rachel: I think with the background we come from, it was not even a conversation, it was just a given.
Walter: It is delicate, and you have to handle it appropriately, so that people are present, but not in a tokenistic way, or in a way that might compromise a designer's vision. But as Rachel said, I never felt it was an issue for us.
Rachel: If you hire us you know it won't be anything else. We would never accidently cast all white people because we 'weren't thinking'. It does happen to people. Not us. When you are dealing with big companies you have a responsibility to always be conscious.
Walter: Something we discovered recently is if something needs to be said, it is fine if we say it. Clients are not going to get mad at us for saying it. I think a lot of the time these things happen because no one says anything. But if we notice something, we will definitely say it. It's called being a responsible adult in the fashion industry!

Finally, with your Midland hat on, name a movie with impeccable casting.
Rachel: *Casanova*.
Walter: I'd say *The Addams Family*.

'You can build a great brand identity entirely through agency girls and boys, but sometimes people feel they need to jump on the street-casting train.'

'The beauty industry is the final frontier. You have to break more barriers than just a creative director saying, 'Wow, she'd be cool in the campaign.''

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Rocket
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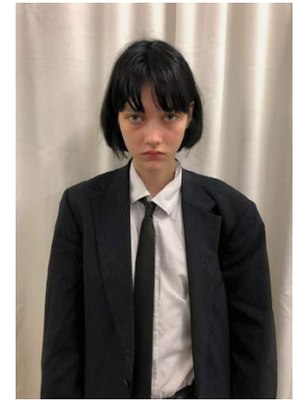
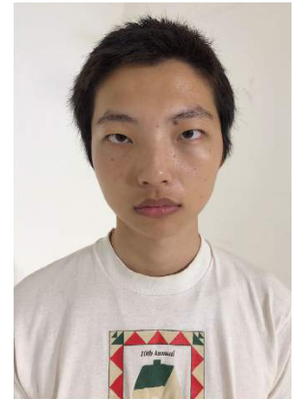




‘Glamour rarely comes out during the day.’

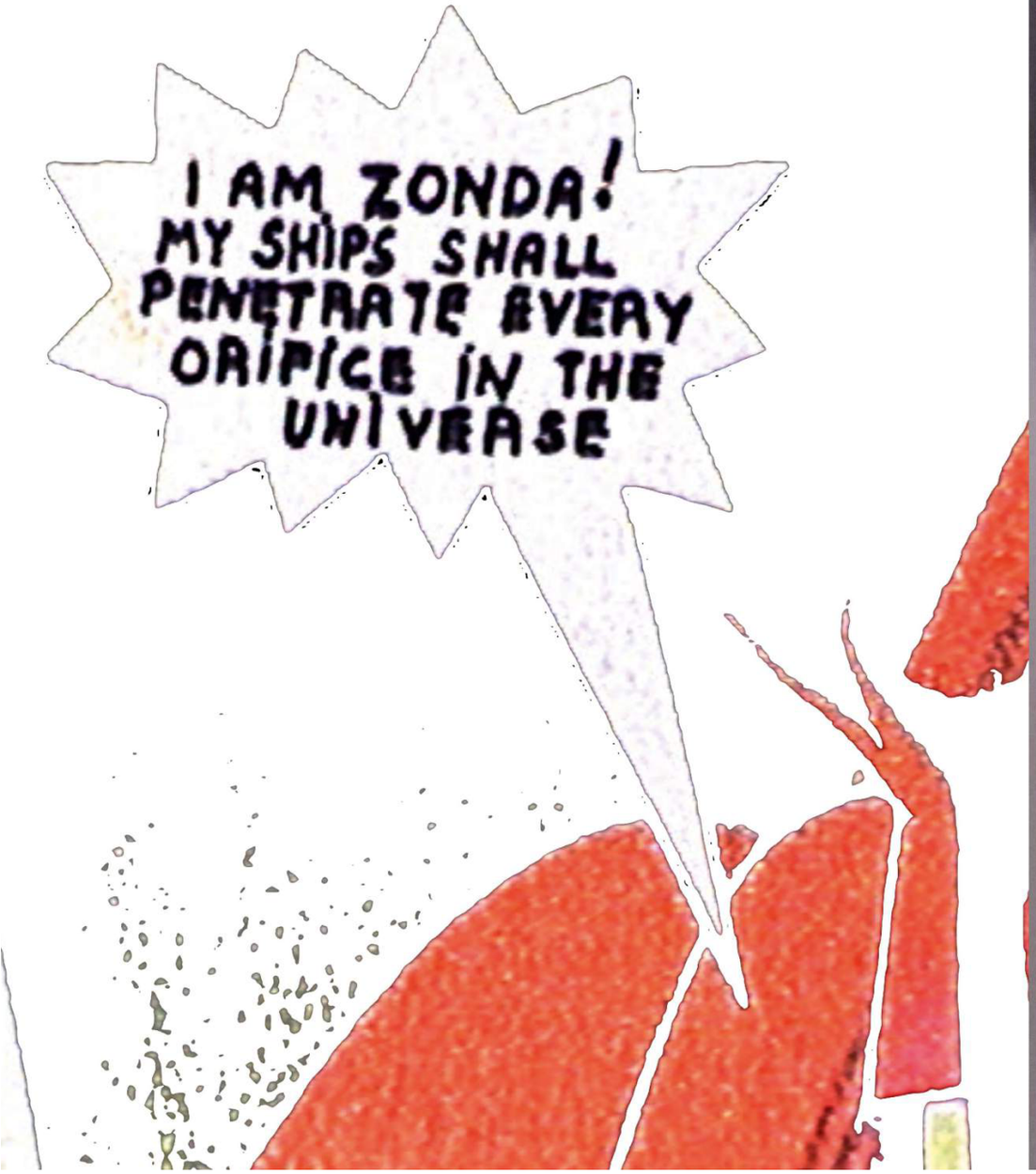
From next big thing to real deal to the most criminally overlooked designer in British fashion history, Antony Price is the closest thing the industry has to an unsung hero.

By Alexander Fury
Photographs by Sharna Osborne
Styling by Vanessa Reid

Previous page:
Chartreuse pleated lamé trousers and bra,
burnished gold lamé draped coat and lamé
and crêpe turban, all by Antony Price,
Autumn/Winter 1983, from the Antony Price archive.
Aliar metallic mule by Manolo Blahnik.

This page:
Swarovski-crystal mesh dress with conical breasts
by Antony Price for Philip Treacy,
Autumn/Winter 1999, from the Philip Treacy archive.
Tights by Emilio Cavallini.
Petrou Mary Jane kitten heels by Manolo Blahnik.

Swarovski-crystal mesh dress with conical breasts by Antony Price
for Philip Treacy, Autumn/Winter 1999, from the Philip Treacy archive.
Bullet bra (worn underneath) by What Katie Did.
Tights by Wolford. Trona pumps by Manolo Blahnik.



Hat by Philip Treacy, Autumn/Winter 1998,
created using feathers from Antony Price's Yokohama cockerels.

Acetate satin bow-back jacket and draped skirt by Antony Price, c.1981, from the Antony Price archive.

Butterfly viscose jersey sculpted hourglass cocktail dress by Antony Price for Philip Treacy, Autumn/Winter 1998. Hat by Philip Treacy, Autumn/Winter 2001 couture, created using feathers from Antony Price's Yokohama cockerels, both from the Philip Treacy archive.

Tudor black and white corded guipure-lace dress Antony Price,
Spring/Summer 1990, from One of a Kind Archive.
Hat by Philip Treacy, Autumn/Winter 1998, created using feathers
from Antony Price's Yokohama cockerels. Tights by Emilio Cavallini.
Vintage Christian Dior pumps from One of a Kind Archive.

Black ciré spiral-zip dress by Antony Price for Plaza, 1979,
from the collection of Alexander Fury.
Suspender belt, knickers and bullet bra (worn underneath)
by What Katie Did. Floral lace hold-ups by Calzedonia.

Crocodile poison-green guipure-lace dress by Antony Price, Spring/Summer 1990, from the collection of Alexander Fury. Matt tights by Falke.

Chantilly lace-overlaid lamé bra, Chantilly lace-draped jacket, lamé and crêpe de Chine turban, all by Antony Price, Autumn/Winter 1983, from the Antony Price archive.

Gold polyester lamé draped and corseted dress by Antony Price, Autumn/Winter 1980, from the collection of Alexander Fury. Tights by Emilio Cavallini.

Swarovski-crystal mesh dress with conical breasts by Antony Price for Philip Treacy, Autumn/Winter 1999, from the Philip Treacy archive. Bullet bra (worn underneath) by What Katie Did. Tights by Wolford. Trona pumps by Manolo Blahnik.

Emerald cotton velvet cocktail dress with panniers and 'pram' sleeves by Antony Price, Autumn/Winter 1988, from the collection of Alexander Fury. Tights by Falke. Tor leather sandals in green by Manolo Blahnik.

Black grosgrain evening jacket by Antony Price, Autumn/Winter 1983, black wool wide-legged trousers by Antony Price, c.1986, both from the collection of Alexander Fury. Cotton cap-sleeved T-shirt with Zonda silkscreen panel by Antony Price for Plaza, c.1976, from the Antony Price archive.

Cobra black horizontally pleated lamé gown with gold lamé appliqué by Antony Price, Autumn/Winter 1983, from the Antony Price archive. Crocodile black ribbon-embroidered lace dress (on chair) by Antony Price, Spring/Summer 1990, from the collection of Alexander Fury. Garter belt, knickers and bra by What Katie Did. Floral lace hold-ups by Calzedonia.

Chartreuse pleated lamé trousers and bra, burnished gold lamé draped coat and lamé and crêpe turban, all by Antony Price, Autumn/Winter 1983, from the Antony Price archive. Aliar metallic mule by Manolo Blahnik.

Crocodile poison-green corded guipure-lace dress
by Antony Price, Spring/Summer 1990,
from the collection of Alexander Fury.
Tights by Falke.

Rolls-Royce pleated gold lamé evening gown
by Antony Price, 2012, from the Antony Price archive.

Blue tissue lamé wrap dress by Antony Price for Plaza, 1979,
Sea Queen blue lamé and grey pleated chiffon gown (worn underneath)
by Antony Price, Autumn/Winter 1983,
both from the collection of Steven Philip. Purple tights by Falke.

Chantilly lace and gold lamé harem trousers, Chantilly lace-overlaid lamé bra,
Chantilly lace-draped jacket, lamé and crêpe de Chine turban, all by Antony Price,
Autumn/Winter 1983, from the Antony Price archive.

Bird's Wing acetate-taffeta dress by Antony Price, Autumn/Winter 1986, from the collection of Alexander Fury. Tights by Emilio Cavallini. Vintage 1940s Hermès gloves from One of a Kind Archive. Leather boots by Sergio Rossi.

Director of photography: Gabi Norland. Production: Ane Kruse. Hair stylist: Cynda Harvey. Make-up artist: Nami Yoshida. Manicurist: Sylvie Macmillan. Set designer: Polly Philip. Casting director: Anita Bitton. Models: Bella Hadid at IMG, Tommy Blue at Anti-Agency, George Leo Manby. Photography assistants: Jodie Herbage, Andy Moores, Sandra Seaton. Loader: Saskia Dixie. Styling assistants: James Chester, Eliza Murray. Hair-styling assistants: Pål Berdahl, Jenna Shafer. Make-up assistant: Yoko Minami. Set-design assistants: Camilla Bytes, Tom Schneider, Mila Sanghera. Set builder: Paul Simpson. Casting assistant: Finlay MacAulay.

Pleated black and gold lamé draped coat and trousers by Antony Price, Autumn/Winter 1983, from the Antony Price archive. Baylow bootie by Manolo Blahnik.

Out in the English countryside – High Wycombe, to be exact – lives the greatest British fashion designer you've never heard of. Or maybe you have. To say you haven't is to listen to naysayers, the most vocal of them being the designer himself, who asserts he is forgotten, overlooked, that he never really made it. If he's being generous about himself, he may say he was ahead of his time. Which he was. Yet it is certainly undeniable that his is an obscure, insider name, a designer's designer – particularly when compared to the starry trajectory of his achievements, the manner in which his work shifted popular culture and readdressed taste in the late 20th century, and how it still affects our eye today.

The designer is Antony Price, a name perhaps more familiar to music fanatics than fashion watchers. Antony Price has only staged six fashion shows in his 50-odd-year career, but his name appears on all eight albums by cult British rock band Roxy Music, an unprecedented credit back then. He fundamentally helped to craft the band's image, so much so that he's sometimes referred to as the band's 'silent member'. He also helped to craft a modern definition of glamour, a potent blending of past and future, male and female, reality and blatant artifice, the whole thing corseted, padded, buttressed and poured all over with molten polyester lamé. Price helped fashion – in all senses of the word – the 1970s glam rock movement in his outfits for Roxy Music and his styling of the Roxy Girls. He helped secure these avatars of a new, unearthly allure for the then-odd gig of sprawling on a white velvet sheet strewn with gold records while growling like a cross between Rita Hayworth and a baying tiger – what cultural commentator Michael Bracewell once described as a bravado reclamation of a Vegas showgirl look – or being trussed up in sex-shop shoes and shiny ciré satin, leashed to an imaginary panther (illustrated by Nigel Weymouth). Through those, and through the tailoring in which he suited up Roxy Music's lead singer Bryan Ferry, Price predicted what the 1980s would become: wide-shouldered, slinkily hipped and expensively dressed. But in the hands of Antony Price, it was – and remains – so much more.

Antony Price has only staged six fashion shows in his 50-year career, but his name appears on all eight albums by Roxy Music.

There's something about the power of glamour that transcends the vagaries of time. That means that when you're looking at an Antony Price dress, it could feasibly originate in 1979, 1999, or 2019. (Or, indeed, 1959 or 1939, with a different name on the label.) There is an immutability to its appeal. Men in slick suits and women in engineered evening gowns, executed in weird fabrics and strange hues – sickly chartreuse, petrol blue, tarnished gold – make a panorama of Price's work, then or now, look like a corrupted frame of Technicolor film. The forms he painstakingly sculpts from cloth also survive, with an eternal appeal. Bryan Ferry dubs him one of the most remarkably gifted people he has ever met, and a 'master craftsman'. He still has suits made by Price, as do the various members of Duran Duran, who Price dressed after Roxy disbanded in 1983. The spectres of Price's clothes cast their long shadows across fashion every few years, when dresses become short and tight and structured, when suits become sharp. He returns when everyone thinks of glamour and is inevitably led back to those Roxy years, to Kari-Ann Muller as a Vargas pin-up made flesh baring her teeth on a pin-up gatefold of ruffled satin (she was paid the princely fee of £20 for becoming the 'face' of Roxy), or Jerry Hall painted blue and crawling across rocks near Holyhead (Price also made the dress for her almost-wedding to Mick Jagger in 1990). In short, when you think of glamour, you have to think of Bryan and Jerry and jacket revers and tight cocktail dresses suggestively slanting open at the crotch. You have to think of Antony Price.

Alexander Fury: We have to talk about Amanda Lear. The ultimate Roxy Girl, maybe.

Antony Price: That panther! We actually went to the trouble of trying to get a leopard, a black panther, the nightmare of it. We would have had to have people with guns, and Amanda was going to freak out, but we couldn't get it, so we decided to get Nigel to do an art drawing. That was the vague idea. That was 1973, right? For the second album, *For Your Pleasure*. It was shot by Karl Stoecker, and Bryan played the chauffeur, and we loved doing that outfit. Bryan had a huge sense of humour about that. He just loved dressing up in all these mad things. He was always going for that. Although quite straight in real life, he knew the art of putting on a show. When people have paid to see something, they need to see *it*.

Today, of course, when everything is malleable, the physical manifestation of glamour is ever-shifting and fluctuating,

The alternative design of Amanda Lear's outfit and pose for the image that became the cover of Roxy Music's second album, *For Your Pleasure* (1973).

but it retains certain foundations: a sense of occasion, of performance; dressed up rather than down; a feel of luxury; lustrous surfaces picking up the light; a lack of extraneous fuss and bother; streamlining. Glamour is also hard work; like its bedfellow camp, it is never natural and it is always absolutely intentional. It also rarely comes out during the day, which is why Antony Price's clothes, painstakingly engineered masterpieces in taffeta or grosgrain, for him and for her, are primarily for the evening. Price himself, during his studies at the Royal College of Art in the late 1960s, would spend the whole day (read: afternoon) getting dressed and made-up, only to hide in the college at closing time, waiting for the caretakers to go home so he could work through the night. 'I remember being in an article in the *Evening Standard* once and it was about "Them" – people from another world,' Price recalls, laughing. 'There was the "Them Peculiar" and the "Them Exquisite". I had managed to take a silly picture of myself with a waist about two inches wide and shoulders that stretched off the picture, and it said "Them Exquisite", and… who was "Them Peculiar"? I think it was Andrew Logan. It said what you had to own to be "Them Exquisite". And every single thing that they said, I had – including a shop dummy. You had to have that. You had to have several pairs of very high-heeled shoes and various women's shoes sitting around. I did!' Price was a creature of the night – or maybe, the nightlife – and he staged those few legendary shows at night, too, sometimes in nightclubs. At his first ever show, for Autumn/Winter 1980, two models marched down the catwalk of the neoclassical Pillar Hall in Olympia in pneumatic biker dresses wearing crash helmets, which they tugged off to reveal… Jerry Hall! Marie Helvin! Price has something of the Ziegfeld to him. His shows were glorious, big-scale theatrical blow-outs – one necessitated the sale of a house to pull off – all notable and memorable and mind-blowing, recorded in grainy footage to be pored over with wonder. How did he do that? Did I really just see that? He dubbed them *Fashion Extravaganzas* and staged them for thousands of spectators who would watch multiple cinematic vignettes devoted to, say, women dressed as sea creatures or fashion versions of *Apocalypse Now* in a sketch called ''Nam' for the show held at the Camden Palace, which opened with the music from *The Omen*. 'There was another scene called 'Marvel Kitsch' – and it was really very kitsch,' he says. 'Everybody's bits were stuck out in lumps, including the boy's bits. Quite serious trouser shapes, all shining, waxy lipstick colours. They looked like comic-book heroes. That's where the name came from. Each scene had a name and the theme and a piece of music.'

Alexander Fury: That Camden Palace show was like 12 shows in one!

Antony Price: That and the Hippodrome shows wiped us out financially. Every show we did would do that because there was never any help. It was just, 'Oh fabulous! How wonderful.' They would clap and drink the champagne and go home and we'd be left to pick up the bill as usual. No one would come forward to help, because it was too early. They always said that. I didn't really understand how to do shows better until later, with my 1988 show. That was much more professional in the respect that I made four or five basic shapes and then started to put them all together in different fabrics. It's called 'a look'! Actually, in fact, it's the same pattern. Before that, because I never had any trouble making patterns and I could just invent anything, I would just sit down and do far too many things. I could have spun it out much further, but I didn't understand that. I had to do something different, instead of doing 20 versions of the same pattern, which would have underlined it better and given it more strength to sell it. But I was a showman. You see, I never had a problem telling what was good and what wasn't, but what I didn't understand is that other people *do* have a problem. I confused people. If you're not actually into design to that extent, you can be overwhelmed by all the information out there. To be quite frank, I didn't understand the clients at all until I started visiting them in their homes. I'll tell you who does understand them: the women who buy the dresses for the shops; they know what's going on in that wardrobe. But I have news for the lots of designers who I hope are reading this now: you don't know what goes on inside women's wardrobes until you get in there and have a look to see what else is hanging in there and what they've chosen. When I did that I began to realize just why people hadn't bought such and such a dress – it was quite the revelation. I think I'm a much better designer for it. I've still got great ideas and I could go on spinning my own ideas forever now, but at the time, I just moved onto the next thing.

'Everybody's bits were stuck out in lumps, including the boy's. Quite serious trouser shapes, all shining, waxy lipstick colours. Like comic-book heroes.'

'Valentino used to direct clients to us,' says Price. 'He used to look in the shop window and say, "They're really clever".' Price's dresses were always clever. And alongside every outré Allen Jones-esque fantasy, there were sure-fire commercial hits, like curvy velvet dresses and taffeta cocktail looks cut with devastating sharpness, or indeed the eternally appealing, perpetually glamorous Roxy-type figures in poly-lamé, Price's favourite fabric. 'It takes the pleats and never tarnishes,' Price tells me, emphatically, slamming a hand like a meaty gavel on the table in front of him. He does that a lot, punctuating every conversation with proclamations, in this case an ardent love of polyester. I have a gold lamé dress he made for Paula Yates in the early 1980s; he used the rest of the same bolt, dragged between multiple addresses as his career switched and shifted, to make a dress for Tilda Swinton in 2011. The fabric looks exactly the same. The most constant components of anything labelled Antony Price are a virtuoso technical prowess, a healthy disrespect for nature, and an urge to transform. Price's clothes are cut to distort the body, chopping it up and rearranging its composite parts like a mad scientist, to create the perfect human being. He calls himself the frock surgeon and, for a price, Price can perform miracles through velvet and boning that many would assume possible only with the surgeon's scalpel, remaking and remodelling the shape of wearers to meet their wildest dreams. The broadcaster Janet Street-Porter once famously called his clothes 'result-wear' – the result she meant was sex, but really the result of wearing Antony Price is whatever you want it to be. Your hips can be narrower, your shoulders wider, your waist waspier. He can rebuild you. His studio just outside London is littered with bodies, moulds of his clients' torsos, male and female, recreated in chicken-wire and papier-mâché, pinpricked with thousands of perforations made when Price constructed new shapes on top of them. There's something corporeal, terribly physical about what Price does. His fashion is truly 'fashioned' and his speech is not filled with the fluff of fashion: he talks about 'nailing' fabric; he tells me how he can make a drystone wall with his own hands. He's described his dresses, with an uncharacteristic lack of deadpan self-deprecation, as 'pure art, crafted around a 22-inch zip'. He's absolutely correct.

As a purveyor of glamour, Antony Price is surpassed only – possibly – by Gilbert Adrian and Travis Banton, costume designers of the 1930s Hollywood studio system whose campy, exaggerated, play-it-to-the-cheap-seats style made celluloid goddesses of the women who wore them. That nostalgia for a bygone glamour was the motivation behind the visual iconography of Roxy Music – a name in itself that overtly references the branding of post-war picture houses – and of course, Price wasn't just dressing the band members, but also the hangers-on, backing singers chosen for appearance over ability, and that seemingly endless roster of Roxy Girls. With the band, Price worked like a movie-studio costumier rather than a conventional fashion designer. Suddenly, sexuality was being used to sell music in the same way it had previously hawked everything from cigarettes to Cadillacs. Yet, although those Roxy Girls were undoubtedly sexualized, sexy, and sexed-up, their appeal was perhaps never actually the one they believed. As the silver screen had done for their parents and grandparents, the ambiguous and questioning morass of male and female teenagers for whom Roxy Music proved such a fantasy escape from humdrum suburbia were seduced *not* by the sex, but by the glamour.

'Tranny-looking women who hang around with rock stars are the girls I make my clothes for. Small arse, small waists, big tits. That's a man's silhouette.'

Glamour has always had a magical power. Indeed, the word originally denoted a kind of sorcery or enchantment: 'to cast the glamour over one' as they put it back in the 18th century. By the 19th, it had become specifically associated with attraction, a kind of magical or fictitious beauty, an alluring charm. Ephemeral and fleeting, intransigent, difficult to pin down – essentially, a chimera. By the early 20th century, that found expression in Hollywood, through stars like Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford and Marlene Dietrich, whose respective 'looks' were mirages, carved from light and shadow, sculpted with padding and corsetry. In the 1970s, Antony Price performed the same trick. First for Roxy, then the world. 'It was the leftovers of a 1970s obsession with old movie stars,' recalls Price. 'Thirties movies. Not 1920s, and not 1940s, but 1930s. And the main emblem of the 1930s was the star – metallic leather stars were on everything.' As he talks, Price again strikes the table between us with his fist, giving gravitas to his words: 'Star shoes!' Bang! 'Star boots!' Bang! 'Stars!' Bang! 'It was all about the picture of Mae West's door with a star on it; *I'm No Angel* and *She Done Him Wrong*. It was ridiculous – extreme, but wonderful.' Price smiles, his features softening

somewhat with nostalgia, his voice lilting. He speaks in an accent that blurs the Yorkshire of his upbringing – born there in 1945, studies at Bradford College – with the West London of his coming-of-age. After graduating from the RCA in 1968 as that year's star, he hung around Ladbroke Grove with a suitably starry, slightly older crowd that included David Hockney and Ossie Clark.

In person, Antony Price isn't very glamorous. I hope he doesn't mind me saying so. He speaks plainly, boldly, in fact resolutely unglamorously, though as a master of illusion, he can, of course, appear glamorous when dressed in his own tonic tailoring. Say a waist-cinched, jacket cut with a dandyish Napoleonic notch lapel, knotted cravat. A peacock who may have an avian version in tow. Price has spent many years breeding birds – peacocks, but also Yokohama cockerels, ornamental chickens whose trailing tail feathers can grow to several feet long. Feathers from Price's birds were used by the milliner Philip Treacy, a friend who drafted Price in as a frequent collaborator in the 1990s to create cantilevered cocktail dresses to sit under his hats. Both men enjoy defying gravity.

do stick figures.' He's put this more bluntly, less politically correctly: 'Tranny-looking women who hang around with rock stars are the girls that I make my clothes for. Small arse, small waists, big tits. That's a man's silhouette.'

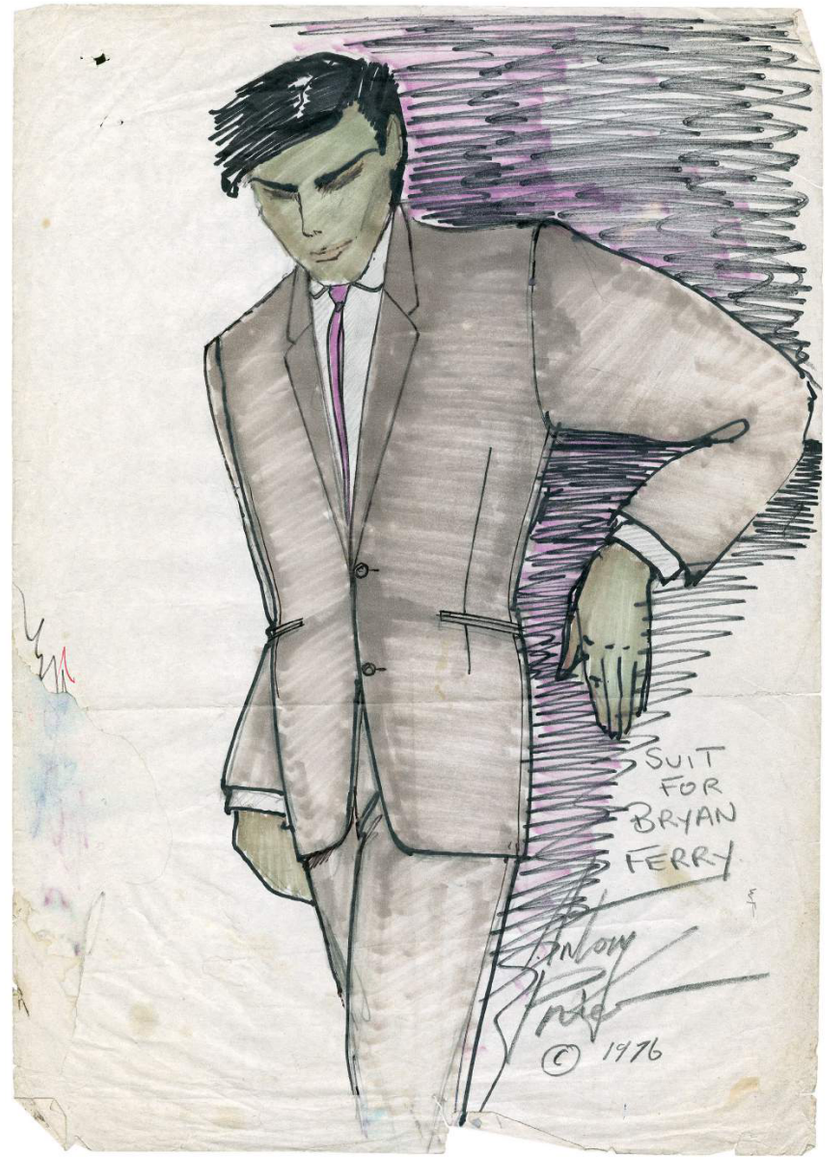
Full-strength Price – the man, or his work – is a million miles from politically correct. A war baby, his father was a Spitfire pilot who perhaps cemented the designer's love of perfectly tailored military uniforms; his mother was, Price says, profoundly difficult, and she and his father separated when he was young. To say Price's ideas of masculine and feminine are firmly rooted in that upbringing isn't as cut and dried as it might first appear, as they are also coloured by Hollywood's golden age – Dietrich in draggy white tie, Jean Harlow in bias-cut satin – images he glimpsed as a child and rediscovered in his teenage years in the early 1960s. Cinemas, after all, provided not only the name for Roxy Music, but also Price's original shop, Plaza, on the King's Road. It was immortalized in Roxy Music's 'Trash', whose lyrics include the line, 'Go to Plaza, where's the trade?' The cover of *Manifesto*, the album on which that song appears, is modelled on a shop window,

Janet Street-Porter once called his clothes 'result-wear', the result she meant was sex, but the result of wearing Antony Price is whatever you want it to be.

The chickens are why, in person and off duty, Price is more likely to be dressed as a gentleman farmer, with tweedy flat cap and sensible footwear. He is fascinated by birds of all descriptions – '*Ornithocheirus*,' says Price, pronouncing the name of a pterosaur genus. 'That was my favourite thing in *Walking with Dinosaurs* when they did the thing about the fantastic aeroplane-sized ones' – and his clothes often have an ornithological bent. Cocktail dresses smothered with cock feathers or scissored into plumes of silk, evening dresses named 'Chicken' or 'Macaw' or 'Bird's Wing', the last engineered from a great span of taffeta buttoned to undulate across the wearer's body. His passion also explains Price's focus on heterosexual machismo and virility through seemingly counterintuitive extravagance. It is the peacock, after all, who is the flamboyant one; the plain pea-hen simply lets her mate flaunt it. Although Price's women aren't shrinking violets either. 'Is it a good-looking man or is it a good-looking woman? That borderline of sexuality is what I'm interested in,' says Price. 'In the DJ Jeremy Healy's fabulous words: "Barbie doll meets Action Man." The ultimate extremes of male and female, both requiring padding and bulges. I don't

framing a static party of Price-clad mannequins frozen in dance gyrations, like monuments to glamour in cheesecake-pastel taffetas.

Price's career didn't begin with Roxy Music. Mick Jagger bought Price's clothes in 1969, wearing them for the *Gimme Shelter* tour the same year, when the designer was working – straight out of the RCA – for Stirling Cooper, a store established by two former cabbies, Ronnie Stirling and Jeff Cooper, in 1967. The entrance was a dragon's mouth, the clothes were hung on pergolas. It was, it's fair to say, extreme and absolutely of its time. And it was shortly after that Price met Ferry, along with the hairdresser Keith Wainwright of the salon Smile (who would later coif him) and the photographer Karl Stoecker – 'My in-house photographer,' Price says – who would shoot numerous Roxy covers. Price at that point was becoming well-known as the next big thing, following in the footsteps of Ossie Clark, who had graduated in 1965. 'I was always three years behind Ossie,' Price says. 'I became his support act.' He would stage shows that ran before Clark's, to get the crowd revved up. 'I was already famous or Bryan



Price's relationship with Bryan Ferry fundamentally shaped the aesthetic of both Roxy Music and his solo career. This sketch is for the design of a typically sharp mid-1970s suit.

would never have touched me, because he's a label queen,' he says. Importantly for Ferry and his vision of Roxy was that through those fashion shows Price knew models. 'He came up to me quite simply because I was a key to Kari-Ann,' Price says. And to Amanda Lear, not yet Jerry Hall, but to Gala Mitchell, who Price dressed not for Roxy, but for the back cover of Lou Reed's *Transformer*. The male model accompanying her on that cover wore another Price innovation, the cap-sleeve T-shirt. (Price didn't just make evening wear; he rankles at that idea.) As with his dresses, the cut of the cap sleeve sliced the arm in the right spot, to make the bicep seem to bulge. 'We sold millions,' he recalls, proudly.

What Antony Price really likes is doing things; ideally, doing everything. With Roxy Music, he famously retooled the entire band, head to toe, for the shots that ended up on the inside of the debut album's gatefold. Before he began, he says, laughing, 'they looked like accountants, and they had divorcee hair. I had to do something with the hair.' So to great resistance, Keith from Smile chopped it off, and Price dressed them up in outlandish Stirling Cooper samples he had in his office. For the cover, they dolled up Kari-Ann as Rita Hayworth (even if Price preferred Jayne Mansfield back then), and an image was born. 'Really we were doing another shoot entirely, but we decided to try,' says Price. 'Bryan, being Libra, will have a go at everything, and when we saw the pictures at the end, we decided that we had to go with it. It's mad and it's fabulous. They were locked into it forever afterwards, but they enjoyed it. They wanted to do it.'

Price's favourite enterprise undertaken with Bryan Ferry was a 1976 video for 'Let's Stick Together', for which Price made everyone's clothes – from Ferry's white *Casablanca*-ish tuxedo to Jerry Hall's tiger-striped evening gown, complete with built-in tail. Price also hairsprayed Hall's wavy wall of frizzed curls, winged her green eyeshadow, and nailed up the curtains that backdrop the whole enterprise. 'Cine-drape,' he says, smiling, his voice rising an octave. Price's often does that, when he's recalling something from the past; it tends to be the camper excursions. 'I did everything but film it,' he says of the video. 'Usually everyone makes me add a gallon of water to it, but that was full strength. And the result is one everyone remembers it. I was given carte blanche for the whole design on that video. Before we decided on one idea, we had three or four different scenarios. One was a gypsy girl dancing near a fire whooping and whirling, but we decided we would go Tarzan-y and have a 1950s cinematic drape thing. There were those ruched curtains in cinemas, so we thought we'd have that. Movies, movies – of course! I remember climbing up to put them up, risking life and limb. It was quite high. The dress was a stretch thing. We painted all the stripes on it. You couldn't get a tiger. Jerry had come over in 1975 to do the cover of the *Siren* LP. Bryan and I had seen her in *Interview*, actually, and we got her over to do *Siren*. We'd never met her before and she turned up for the shoot, which was... a nightmare, which Jerry has written about. Karl Stoecker had met Errol Flynn's daughter and gone back to America with her. So we got a fabulous friend of mine, Graham Hughes, who had been working with Robert Palmer. I found the location on a geological programme I was watching one Saturday morning. We had to be out at sea, to shoot back in shore. I actually went down there – it was Holyhead. There's a lighthouse there, too. The day I first went, it was massive green sea and enormous waves crashing against the rocks. But when we turned up two weeks later, with the costume ready-made, the whole thing had changed. It was like a mill pond, smooth, and turquoise. I had to change the colour of the costume and re-evaluate the whole thing. But it worked beautifully. We did use a slight blue gel, on the light, and we actually used car lights because it was direct sunlight above. Seals and canoeists in orange canoes kept popping up – the orange canoeists were right in the middle of the picture! We had it all, every problem. It was the hottest day of the year; it was about a hundred degrees. Jerry was melting. Everything was melting. The glue was coming apart on the gusset of the costume... It was in rubber, swimsuit rubber, but all painted with car spray.'

Price's trousers were named Ziggurat by the designer, after supportive temple structures in ancient Mesopotamia, and 'arse pants' by the world.

Alexander Fury: It had been glued together?
Antony Price: Yes!
You resprayed it? Because the colour changed?
Yes, absolutely. We had to change completely. I had the spray cans with me and I did it through a piece of fabric with scales on it. Sapphire Mist, the paint was called. You can't imagine how different the sea was when we got there to how I'd seen it two weeks before. Jerry was covered in body make-up, we had to get it off her in a bath. She was carried stark naked in towels onto the train at the end. The train was pulling out – the last bleeding train to London. It was hysterical, the shoot, fantastic. There were some wonderful pictures of Bryan holding an umbrella above his mermaid.

Price started as he meant to continue: he still has storyboards and sketches for the visuals for Roxy Music albums and videos, as well as for the photographs shot (sometimes by others, ideally by Price himself) for his advertising campaigns. At Plaza, the cinematically named shop on the King's Road, Price did everything. He made dresses, sure, and suits that cost as much as a second-hand car. 'They weren't that expensive,' he gripes, contrarily, even if his nickname on the 1980s London club circuit was 'Fantasy Prices'. Yet he also did the shop-fit, designed the logo, drew the advertising (with the strapline: 'Clothes for studs and starlets'). He even nailed garments to boards, as in a strange retail conceit, the clothes at Plaza were ordered through a hatch, dispatched by a square-jawed, devastatingly handsome henchman, who was Price's equally intimidating counterpart to Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren's Jordan, who was selling shredded mohairs and anarchy-emblazoned muslins at Seditionaries, just down the road.

'Jerry Hall was covered in body make-up, we had to get it off her in a bath. She was carried stark naked in towels after the shoot onto the train.'

Alexander Fury: Can we talk more about the shops? Because they really were a thing. It was Stirling Cooper first, right, then Che Guevara?
Antony Price: Stirling Cooper was my first shop design – and by design, I mean everything. I'm talking about what the clothes were hung on, the carpet, which was specially made, the lampshades. Everything was done specially and so I was a dab hand, and still am, at putting together quite serious architecture. I've never been asked to do it by anyone else; I'm never asked to do anything by anyone else. Surprisingly enough. I suppose I don't push myself. The Stirling Cooper one was fantastic, it really was. A real feat. It was completely Japanese and all the clothes were on huge black pagodas. The hangers were brilliant. Everything about it was brilliant. The second shop was Che Guevara, this huge 1930s thing to rival Biba. It was a feast of deco, of black and green carpets in degraded stripes, with fountains and palms and god knows what else in it. Then I did the Plaza shop, with the blue Optrex window.
Was that yours? The first one you owned?
Yes, the first was Plaza. We took it over, Rick [Cunningham, Price's long-time friend and former business partner] and I. That was in 1979. The window of Plaza was a cinema screen – it used to cause traffic jams because it faced north and the sun was behind it. It was very, very difficult in those days, the technology to do that; lighting a screen in daylight, which is now common place at the Olympic Games, say, was a nightmare then. Basically, it was a great shop in the wrong place because we didn't have enough money to put it in the right place. We sold two suits a week, but when a shop took them up to the West End and sold eight in a week, we realized we were in the wrong place. There was nothing you could do about that.
I suppose it was more counterculture on the King's Road, with Seditionaries, then World's End.
No one was going to back it, though; it was too early for all that. London fashion hadn't happened then, I was out on my own, too early. Again. We closed the shop in 1980. There was a show the same year that cost so much we had to jack the shop in, because it wasn't making enough. We needed to move somewhere else and it took us some time to get it together to move to the one in South Molton Street, which happened in the mid-1980s. The Plaza clothes were quite brilliant, and the interior was something of a revolution as well. The inside of it… the clothes were *nailed*. I hated the look of clothes hanging on rails from the side. I thought it looked like a dreadful wardrobe, and I thought it should look like a museum. We had these boards and you turned them sideways and half a stuffed garment was on it, nailed up. Like one leg stuffed with a body inside it. They were all three-dimensional, which looked rather beautiful. Half a jacket with a tie and tits in it and everything. Also, they couldn't be nicked. Then customers came in and ordered it through this hole. The assistant would then assess the size and then bring one up and you would then go into the mirrored changing room and try it on.
It sounds intimidating.
It wasn't intimidating. We had great looking staff and the customers couldn't wait to get in that mirror box with them, thank you very much! They used to come back with any excuse to get in there!

Price's shops were destinations – but it was the clothes that drew people there. In the early 1980s, when Michael Costiff complained to Westwood about trousers that would leave his arse hanging around his knees, she reportedly said, 'Well, go to Antony Price then.' Price howls with laughter when I tell him this. Apparently, he didn't know. Price's trousers, named Ziggurat by the designer, after supportive temple structures in ancient Mesopotamia, were dubbed 'arse pants' by the world. They acted, Price himself says, like a 'Wonderbra for the rear', and were cut with the legs wide apart, as if straddling a horse. 'They weren't for skinnies,' he says, 'but people with powerful legs. I always liked that kind of figure.' Many companies have copied the cut. In fact, everything's been copied – get him on the subject of Thierry Mugler and his mouth twists slightly, though he admires the aesthetic, obviously. And, he allows, often 'it's not copying, it's just simultaneous thinking'.

'When Roxy were touring in 2001, I said to Bryan, "You're lucky because you can remake all your old dresses in more expensive fabric, with a better machinist".' Price shrugs. 'I've learned to hate my clothes. I've learned to hate them and be embarrassed.' Since winding down his wholesale business in the 1990s, Price has created clothes to private order for a welter of wealthy clients, including, for over a decade, Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, about whom he is effusive. Another is Kylie Minogue. Still more remain discreetly nameless, but demanding. 'Nothing's ever good enough anyway,' Price says, recounting how one customer said nothing about the dress he'd made her, until everyone else had: 'Five days afterwards, when she'd ticked off the number of people who had called to say how fabulous she looked, *then* suddenly, the dress is fabulous. Up until then, it is not fabulous. On the night she wears it, it's not fabulous. People under stress want to take it out on somebody. It's stage fright, and who better to whip than the dressmaker?' Price isn't sad, he's angry.

If you were to compare Antony Price to a single figure in the history of fashion, I'd be inclined to select Charles James. Mention it to Price and his eyebrows shoot skyward, and he shrugs, again. He's uncharacteristically silent, albeit momentarily. That's because Charles James is the real deal, as is Antony Price, and the latter knows the comparison rings true for both positive and negative reasons. Both are geniuses. Both have been feted and ignored in near-equal measure, their singular styles falling in and out of fashion; both created clothes for cadres of loyal clients, refining and perfecting the same methods they often invented. They were both enamoured with the potential of a marriage of mass production with creative ingenuity. Like Price's design for a vinyl dress with zips that languidly span around the torso, one of his most complex design feats, immortalized in 1972 in British magazine *Nova* as part of a striptease by Amanda Lear, shot by Brian Duffy, titled, 'How to undress in front of your husband'. Price and James also both have a propensity for attempting a specific, unconvincing illusion: creating dresses with structures trussed with layers of delicate, filmy fabric, a bit like camouflaging a tank with chiffon. As James draped the rigid carapace of his 1951 Swan ballgown with tulle, blurring the sharp lines of a structure that weighs 5.5 kilogrammes, so Price veiled British television presenter and journalist Paula Yates with a film of cappuccino-coloured lace, her figure beneath corseted to convex unreality for a 1994 Brit Award ceremony now remarkable for nothing bar his dress.

If you were to compare Antony Price to a single figure in the history of fashion, I'd be inclined to select Charles James. Both are geniuses.

Theirs is also a shared obsession with abstracting natural forms into fabric, or with reinventing history; James frequently referenced fashion of the Victorian age; in 1988, Antony Price made a dress that resembled Scarlett O'Hara's green velvet number, but cut it off mid-thigh. I would probably end with Price's assertion that people will only properly remember him, and hurrah his talent, when he's dead, which is exactly what happened with James and his big 2014 show at the Met, 36 years after this death. Maybe Price will get his show, one day, although there aren't that many examples of his work around, in museums or otherwise. Price's own archives fill a couple of rails and he does, remarkably, still have the pattern pieces for every single garment he has ever made. These crates of paper ghosts wait to be resurrected if Price is ever offered the kind of serious backing that has eluded him for decades. He also has total recall of virtually anything he's made: talk to him about, say, a shot-blue taffeta men's suit from 1982, and he'll recall how it was shown at the Camden Palace show (and later, at Le Palace in Paris) for men and for women. It was made in a women's couture fabric, and Price had to wash it, by hand, and scrape off the finish to allow him

Antony Price created the stage design and all the clothing for the music video of Roxy Music's *Let's Stick Together* (1976), including Jerry Hall's tiger dress.

to manipulate the material the way he needed. Those tailored suits, incidentally, later became the uniform of Duran Duran, whose members wore Price in their 'Rio' video, and have ever since.

Price's work is a lie that tells the truth, to quote Jean Cocteau. It is absolutely, unapologetically artificial, yet, at the same time, it — and he — is absolutely real. That Cocteau-ism is often used as a descriptor for camp, and, rest assured, it is camp. No other word can describe Tilda Swinton dressed as a poly-lamé life-size recreation of the Spirit of Ecstasy with a two-foot pleated flange of gilt spanning each shoulder, a dress Price calls the 'Rolls-Royce'. But as camp, Price's work manages to be both knowing and innocent, thus doubly affective and satisfying. There isn't an ounce of cynicism in what he does, and for all the coolness of the image he crafted around Roxy Music, there isn't an ounce of coldness or snobbery. Witness that love of much-maligned synthetics, or Price's adoration of decidedly dowdy Velcro as an idiosyncratically unglamorous fastening solution. 'I was never truly fashion you see,' Price says, meaning the elitism and hierarchy of fashion, its exclusivity by exclusion. Price after all began his career in mass-manufacturing, and he loves the industrialization of couture, of his ideas (something which, as it happens, Charles James adored, too). He wants to dress the world. 'I only judge things by what they look like. I don't care who did them,' he continues. 'It doesn't matter to me.' Perhaps that helps when Price is so often lumped together with the music industry rather than the fashion world. 'Roxy was a small part of my career,' he says. 'But when I started, music people thought fashion was snobby and fashion thought music was dirty.' The inextricable intertwining of the two is another legacy of Price, and it is his alone.

Mercurial, garrulous, somewhat ostracized by the fashion industry, but warmly embraced by friends and fans, Antony Price is the closest thing fashion has to an unsung hero in the age of digital over-exposure. From next big thing to real deal to the most criminally overlooked designer in British fashion history. As long as there are still record players, though, kids will discover his work, unfolding an album cover to see Kari-Ann or Amanda or Jerry panting and preening and camping it up, before wondering, like the audiences at Price's early, all-too infrequent shows, 'What the hell is *this*?' Because those Roxy Music covers, regardless of their seismic influence, remain unequalled in the annals of music visuals, halfway between pop art and pop music. They – like those Mae West films, like Antony Price's clothes – will endure, they will survive, because, to borrow Price's words, they are ridiculous, extreme – and wonderful.

This Marvel Comics-inspired dress is from 1983's *Fashion Extravaganza*, a series of 12 themed vignettes fusing music and fashion staged at Camden Palace.

BALENCIAGA
BALENCIAGA

‘Designing shoes is a marginal discipline.’

Pierre Hardy on 20 years of fashioning footwear.

By Éric Troncy
Photographs by Erwan Frotin
Styling by Azza Yousif

Lava Sandal, Summer 2014

No Heel Wedge Sandal, Winter 2015

Wedge Pump, Summer 2002

Riva Bella Sandal, Summer 2018
V Line Sandal, Summer 2020

Paloma Pump, Winter 2017

Sottsass Open Toe, Winter 2013

Blade Pump, Winter 2014

Monolithe Pumps, Summer 2015

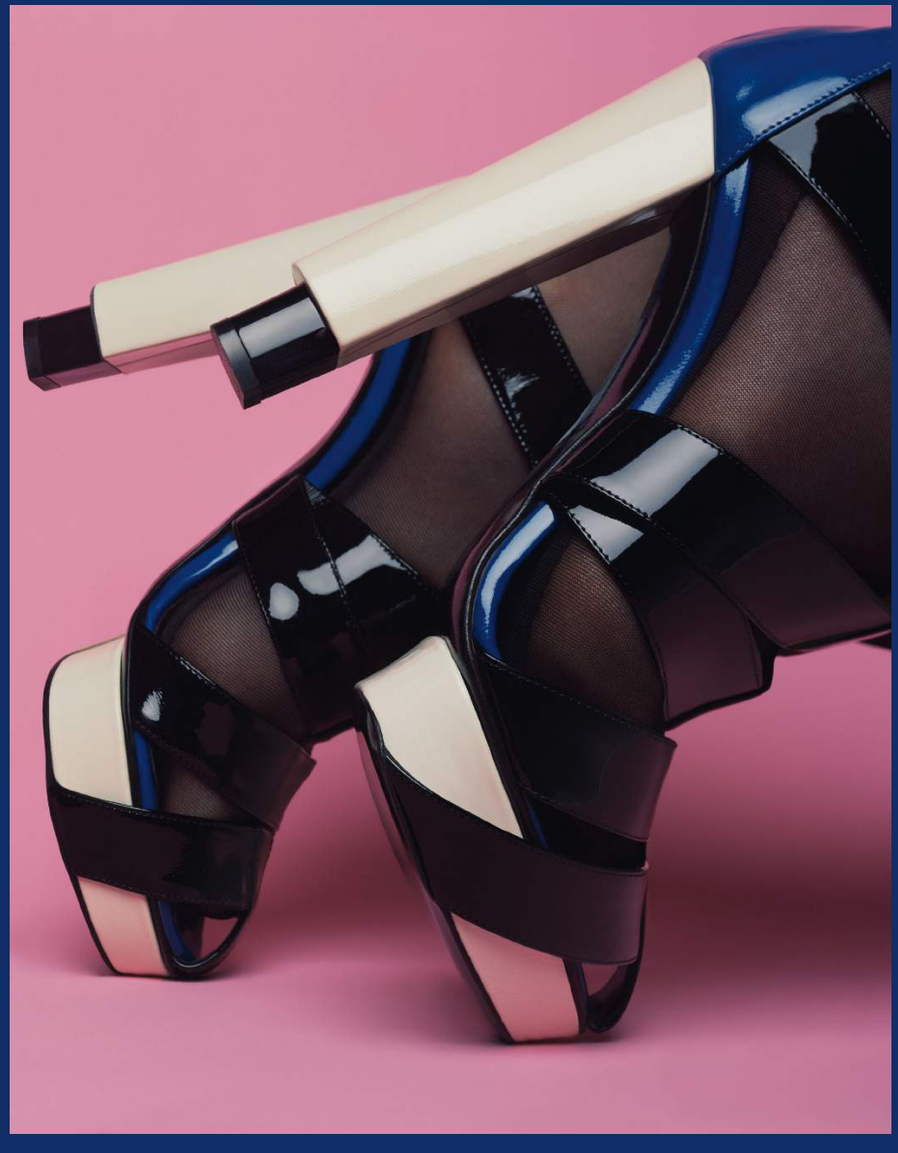
Platform Sandal, Summer 2007

Bloom Sandal, Summer 2019

Targa Sandal, Summer 2020

Targa Mule, Summer 2020
Open Toe, Summer 2006

Sandals, Winter 2007



Stair Heel Sandal, Summer 2009

Models: Arisha at Silent, Fanny Piot at Sport Models, Manon Tesson at Women 360, Marie Frick at 360 Management. Hair stylist: Sébastien Richard. Make-up artist: Cécile Paravina. Manicurist: Brenda Abrial. Photography assistants: Arturo Astorino, Marcel Boudan, Morgane Pouliquen. Styling assistant: Fanny Stranders.

Yayoi Mule, Summer 2018
Kelly Mule Summer 2018

A dancer and costume designer for the Matt Mattox company, Pierre Hardy hadn't really planned on becoming the Pierre Hardy who created his own shoe label 20 years ago. It was there that he designed the now celebrated *talon lame* or blade heel, an essential shoe whose aesthetic statement still feeds into his work today, and which he has rereleased for his 20th 'anniversary' (a word that makes him imperceptibly grimace). Less moved by the past than the future, the thing he finds worth celebrating is when the contemporary world means fantasy, freedom, creativity and invention.

He often talks about working 'on the margins', by which he means the margins of his chosen discipline's mainstream, but it strikes me that he uses this word to evoke other edges, the liminal spaces occupied by aesthetics and behaviour, which shelter those who reinvent the world or at least do all they can to avoid its routines.

Pierre Hardy was appointed women's shoe designer at Dior 'by complete chance' without ever having really designed shoes; he stayed from 1988 to 1992. Then, in the early 2000s, he created a revolution in the world of luxury shoes with his 'sneakers not made for running', the start of a movement whose effects are still being felt today.

A few years ago, he and I met at his former offices in the 10th *arrondissement*, near the Canal Saint-Martin in northern Paris, with a view to publishing a catalogue of his work. This time around, in early October this year, we sat and talked in entirely different surroundings, his new offices on the more classically chic Left Bank, behind Place Saint-Sulpice. A change of neighbourhood that feels not without a certain significance. "Marion found it!", he says in his defence, laughing loudly, referring to Marion Daumas-Duport who oversees Pierre Hardy's communications and has worked alongside him for as long as I can remember. The garden at the back of his new office looks like a rural schoolyard from another century. Planted with big trees, with a bench and a birdbox, it has a sort of divine tranquillity that contrasts with the bustling city outside. It's an unexpected decor, because the move to these comfortable, bourgeois surroundings feels somehow in visceral opposition to Pierre's own nature. Behind the designer Pierre Hardy, the impeccable businessman deeply connected to contemporary reality, lies the other Pierre Hardy: a man who loves his freedom and is proud to reject convention.

Éric Troncy: Pierre, the last time I came to your offices to talk to you, we were doing a catalogue of your work, and you were in offices near the Canal Saint-Martin. And here you are on the Left Bank!

Pierre Hardy: [Laughs] It's pure chance, like so many things in life. It was never planned like that. We wanted to get closer to the centre – without really knowing which centre – and then we found this place. I'm not really very Left Bank, but to be honest, it doesn't really change much on a daily basis. Not that we function in a vacuum, but there's a laboratory aspect here, on a low-level scale. In the same way, I'm not sure that the 10th *arrondissement* influenced us that much. The offices were quite unusual, not really typical of that *arrondissement*; it was like a cross between the Palais Garnier and Italy. But I don't really believe in that permeability – the place I work in has little impact on what I do. I'm far more aware of the bigger picture: Paris as a whole. It embodies a certain taste, proportions, a certain light, in short, all the postcard views we know, whether we're for or against them. I wouldn't do the same thing in New York or Los Angeles, obviously.

You live mainly in Paris, right?

Yes, I was born here and grew up here. Now I live here, and I never go away for the weekend. That said, I would like to live in Los Angeles. Most of my New Yorker friends have moved there now. It seems less preformatted. And I think it's amusing that you get offered a spliff instead of a coffee when you do business meetings there. New York became a model, and then its own copy.

Isn't Paris a bit like that too?

Sure, but in Paris there's a greater depth of field, historically and culturally, and that nourishes the city from the inside. To me, New York seems more 2D. But Paris, like other cities, has really changed! London was interesting, but not any more, New York was interesting, but not any more. There's no longer any fashion in New York. There are markets, businesses, but there's practically no more creativity. The city itself is much less creative. Everything's been pruned; it's too clean, safe, rich. In the

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art world, the biggest galleries are there, but it's a metropolis that functions like a monopoly. There are three huge galleries that crush all the others. For fashion, it's similar in Paris, three or four big groups control everything horizontally and vertically, while the rest are just trying to get by.

Aren't you partners with Hermès?
Yes, after working together for a long time, Hermès became a minority shareholder in my business. We've known each other for 30 years; it's a family, and that changes everything. They have real savoir-faire, they're not industrialists or investors. They're people who know how to make a product, and how to sell it, they are very pragmatic.

Doesn't the idea of 'savoir-faire' define you pretty well?
Do you think? And yet I don't know how to do much, and definitely not a shoe. I know how it's done, but I don't know how to do it. But it's like success or love, it's other people who can have an outside opinion, but on the inside, you're never sure of anything.

You don't know how to make shoes; is that why you carry on doing it?
Probably. Doing something we know how to do is often about doing it the same way. I have an infinite respect for artisans, and the more they do one thing, the more they know how to do it in a masterful way, but I think that expertise is also a prison. And I have a problem when it comes to comparing art with applied arts. I don't think they're really the same thing.

What you're saying makes me think of a German painter, Charline von Heyl, whose work I really admire. She tries to never do the same thing twice, whether it's a style or a technique. There are no two paintings alike, or which use the same savoir-faire. It's a pretty demanding approach to take in an era when 'the market' requires every artist to have their own identifiable style. But at the same time, the history of 20th-century art is all about the emancipation of conventional savoir-faire – that said, though, if you're a good potter, you can still be shown in a big contemporary art museum! Savoir-faire is back.
I think Jeff Koons' bouquet of tulips, which has just been installed in Paris near the Grand Palais, is a good example. It's been perfectly made, there's no doubt that he works with the very best artisans, but the sculpture is pretty ugly. Mainly because the hand is so badly designed; its gesture is clumsy. Yet I'm the first to say he is a contemporary genius! I remember the first time I ever saw his work, it was at the same time as Haim Steinbach – same thing, impeccable production, high-end artisans – at the Pompidou Centre in the late 1980s…

You saw that exhibition? I remember it perfectly, too. It was called *Les Courtiers du désir* and it was a group show dedicated to young American artists; it was 1987. In retrospect, the Pompidou Centre was really at the cutting edge – is it still? – because Jeff Koons' now-famous *Rabbit* was in that show, and it had just been made and shown for the first time a few months before at Sonnabend in New York. I've got a funny story to tell you about it: one of those *Rabbit* sculptures recently sold at Christie's for $91 million. At the time of the exhibition, the acquisition committee at the Pompidou Centre was offered one for 80,000 francs, which is about €15,000, and the 'experts' on that commission deemed it of no interest! So, here we are in your office and on your desk is a shoe with this heel… I get the feeling that in your designs it's all about the heel . You're rereleasing the blade heel from your first collection, which was 1999/2000.
I haven't found anything better since then; nothing is more radical, simple or efficient. The heel is crucial — that's what it's all about because there isn't much room for play elsewhere. Of course, there is everything that goes on above, but the creative space is very minimal. The heel is an empty space that can be filled with a ball, a cup, a Camembert, a roll of sticky tape – anything can be a heel! It's the only little space that is really free, within the rules of load-bearing points. It's the only virgin space where you can invent things and at the same time, it's very, very constrained.

This re-edition of the blade coincides with an anniversary: 20 years of the house of Pierre Hardy.
I'm not a huge fan of anniversaries, and this doesn't really strike me as one in the sense that it isn't the 20th time I've done the same thing. What I'm doing today is nothing like what I was doing 20 years ago. I was very naive! Today I can't imagine how I was able to put 15 things on a bench and say, 'Come on and see, they're amazing!'

'I have infinite respect for artisans. The more they do one thing, the more they know how to master it, but I think that expertise can also be a prison.'

For someone opening a gallery 20 years ago, the promise was also very different from the reality of being a gallerist today. The very idea of almost daily long-haul journeys would have seemed utterly far-fetched: Monday in Hong Kong, Tuesday in New York, Wednesday in London and Thursday at another fair somewhere in the world, without counting the private views of artists the gallery represents and where the gallery has to be represented. The people who 20 years ago chose this job or this sort of relationship with artworks have had to adapt or disappear.
Are you thinking about the galleries, like Air de Paris, that were all located together in the 13th *arrondissement*? **Air de Paris is a bit different because it's succeeded in keeping its integrity in regards to the initial commitments. Sure, it's a gallery that does all the necessary work today, the incessant representation, but it hasn't multiplied the number of artists it represents by 12, which is what most of its foreign counterparts did to satisfy the different markets. It doesn't have 10 artists for the Asian or Gulf market; it hasn't opened two, three or four branches on several continents. Others took a different gamble, Almine Rech, for example, who was also in the 13th *arrondissement* now has galleries in Paris, Shanghai, London, New York, and Brussels. They're two different conceptions of this profession, and whichever one you chose, you have to do it thoroughly! Fashion has changed too, hasn't it?**
Fashion is an industry with suppliers, producers, factories, sales spaces, means of communication, with groups that master everything, from the herds of cows to the tanneries to the sales outlets in cities all over the world that reproduce the same layout and, incidentally, have a dramatic impact on property prices. For groups that are worth $5 or $10 billion, a boutique costing $5 or $10 million means nothing, but for independent brands, it's become impossible. There's an exclusion based on a financial power that didn't exist before.

How did you start making shoes?
By complete accident, and it would be fair to say, 'step by step'. I was a student at the Beaux-Arts, working towards becoming a teacher with a degree in fine art. Fashion for me was a distraction, but I think when you embark on a certain path, then it becomes interesting.

Did you know people who were already making shoes, and say to yourself, I'd like to do that? Generally, that's how the vocations of an artists are born, we want 'do that', or belong to that club. My friend [artist] Bertrand Lavier likes to say that you don't become a painter because you saw a lovely sunset, but because you saw a lovely sunset painted by Turner…
I didn't know anyone who made shoes! And then someone said, 'Do you want to come and do shoes at Dior?' And I said, 'OK, why not?' It was the end of Marc Bohan, when Gianfranco Ferré arrived; I think it was 1987.

You knew Marc Bohan?
I met him once. He talked to me while touching his hair and looking in the mirror behind me. It was horrible.

You weren't impressed by him then or the others afterwards at Dior?
You know what, I didn't take it that seriously. It's hard to explain today, but I really enjoyed it. I worked with a gang of friends, my friend was in charge of the studio, and at no moment did I say to myself that I was going to design the biggest collection of shoes for the biggest and best-known brand in the world. Because that's what Dior was at that time!

Those were good times, weren't they?
Tell me about it! I never once saw anyone from the HR department. And the weight of decision making wasn't at all the same. Today we're in a market, and each collection is marketed, locked down, calibrated; it wasn't like that before.

That happened to a lot of disciplines. It happened to music, movies, too, fashion obviously, and more recently with the visual arts, but now it's over: it's an industry with its marketing rules and big groups dominating the market. That said, it's just another framework to work in…
Exactly. You just have to say that you work 'in the margins'; there isn't really an avant-garde any more. Cinema used to be a discipline with a real avant-garde, but that's become marginal, too.

In all disciplines, when newcomers ape the idea of avant-garde within a context that's become an industry, it's all

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a bit pathetic. Rei Kawakubo can continue to do it because she always has, but maybe that doesn't apply to someone like Iris van Herpen. I remember an interview with Kawakubo where she said very clearly that art didn't inspire her at all and had nothing to do with her activities. What I find amusing today is how all the fashion designers claim to be so inspired by contemporary art, and in fashion magazines there's more to read about art than about fashion… Are you inspired by art?
Definitely, but not in a literal way. Apart from a few specific cases of direct citations, say Lichtenstein or Sol Lewitt, it's a complex alchemy, a bit of what I see, a bit of what I retain. They're more like filters. I don't have archives and I don't do mood boards. If I do them, it tends to be afterwards, to explain where something has come from. It's never the inspiration, and never as a literal translation. Today, people mourn Monsieur Saint Laurent, but I remember those Braque, Picasso and Van Gogh collections, and they were horrible, sequinned reproductions on suits with old-lady cuts.

Is Pierre Hardy a big house now?
No, it's a small house, there's only about 25 of us; it really is a 'marginal' discipline. Even Manolo Blahnik, who is much better known than me and has been around for much longer, is marginal. But that's the paradox of fashion: you have to be both marginal and like everyone else.

Is there more freedom in the creation of shoes than the creation of clothes?
No. If you visit a department store in New York or Paris, the brands are doing roughly the same thing. It's quite similar to the 1950s when there were essentially only court shoes. Now there are biker boots, court shoes, hiking boots, sneakers, ballet flats, loafers, but all the brands look alike.

Ah yes, sneakers. Let's talk about them, because it's all partly your fault, isn't it? What made you think about making a sneaker that wasn't for running, at a time when no one else was doing it?
Firstly, because sneakers represent eternal youth! That was probably the initial motivation. I remember when we used to fix wheels to them to make roller skates… It's a whole dynamic unto itself. A person wearing black Oxfords instantly feels 10 years older. That goes for the body – because you don't walk the same way when you're wearing sneakers – as well as the imagination. Like hyaluronic acid or Botox, it's just an illusion, but a very good one. And there's more possibility for expression, especially with men's shoes, where the choice can be quite narrow. Sneakers meant men were allowed to wear other colours than black and brown. It offered men easy access to fantasy. And it also led me to discover another skill, because designing sneakers is nothing like designing a leather shoe. It's a different timescale, different materials, you have to do 3D drawings and 3D printed mock-ups to check all the volumes, choose the plastics to inject; it's like a piece of furniture! It's got nothing in common with the shoemaking profession. It's really fun, as well as being very restrictive: the technical-specifications sheet for a sneaker is 25 lines long. This part is in such and such a material, this part in something else, and then this bit in something else again. The game lies in the combinations, in the accumulation. A sneaker is a construction. I get the feeling we're going back to simpler things, more minimal, more monochrome, less voluminous, but the one-upmanship has gone a very long way, especially in terms of ugliness! Ultimately a sneaker is about restraints and the aesthetics often result from those restraints, from a technology or a lack of technology. There are lots of things whose form derives from the very materiality, which creates a certain shape and this shape then becomes an aesthetic. The eye adapts and ends up finding it beautiful, or at least we believe it to be beautiful. The best comment I ever heard after a show was Catherine Deneuve when a journalist asked her what she thought of the collection. 'We'll get used to it,' she said! That's a crazy intelligence.

To come back to this anniversary…
The good thing about it is that it forces you to look at the past, which I've now done and I'm ashamed of nothing! Will the blueprint we're using at the moment also allow me to do things that I'll be proud of in 10 years' time? I hope so. I also like being able to tell myself that I could stop everything right now, in one fell swoop, with a splendid gesture, but that would be really stupid!

Like colette?
Pierre doesn't realize I'm talking about the Parisian store, not the celebrated French writer, and recites a quote by her, printed on a business card on his desk: 'Il faut avec les mots de tout le monde écrire comme personne' – 'One must write like nobody else using everybody's words' – before realizing the mix-up and continuing.
Ah! I don't know what Sarah [Andelman]'s motivations were, but when you know that the boutique across the road has sold for €5 million and it was 40 square metres, while hers was nearly 300 metres, you might think twice about continuing to sell fashion. We're at the heart of the question: will the looming logic, the logic of this world in which fashion now exists, allow things to happen or will everything be broken and reconstructed?

'Brancusi was not the most important sculptor of the 20th century. When people come across these offensive racist idiocies, they have a responsibility not to reproduce and further perpetuate them.' In other words, considering Brancusi as the greatest sculptor of the 20th century is racist because he is white. Today, as Bret Easton Ellis masterfully proved in *White*, ideology has replaced aesthetics, and we're not immune to a total rewriting of history. When they discover that the wood used for Rothko's paintings has contributed to deforestation, will he be taken down in museums? And aren't the lead paintings of Keifer a terrible health risk?
Between leather and polymers, that's one of the major issues today. People are eating less meat, so there are fewer herds, and with intensive rearing, the herds are malnourished, so the skins are of bad quality, and the animals are badly treated, so the skins have scars. Leather is less acceptable, and the tannery industry is extremely polluting and requires huge amounts of water. Even if better processes are being put in place, it takes time. Luxury brands are criticized, but they're actually the ones really thinking about things in a constructive way. I'm making things on the margin. One group might make 3 million pairs of one model a year; I only make 3,000. I make to order; I never throw anything out; I have no stock; nothing goes unsold – there's very little waste. That's not an excuse, but I'm doing my best. There's no alternative to leather that's just as comfortable. Current research into producing synthetic leather by cloning synthetic cells isn't yet developed enough: it takes a year still to make 10 centimetres of material that's horribly expensive, ugly and unworkable. The sneaker is an answer in some ways, because there's no problem of arching and shaping, the upper can be produced in a clean way from synthetic materials, and it's adapted to all genders and all climates.

You mention genders, if the vegan consciousness is a characteristic of the era, so is gender fluidity. The idea that being born a boy or a girl is no longer something you take for granted is new. How do you deal with that in a world of 'men's' or 'women's' shoes?
In one way, it's very simple because girls have always worn boys' shoes. In another, it's more complicated, but there are collections for 'men who think they're men' and others for those who feel a bit less alpha. These aren't men who are going to wear women's shoes, even if women's sizes are getting bigger; today we go up to a 42. The idea of being born a boy or a girl and not taking it for granted isn't really that new, it's just that before you had to shut your mouth and act 'as if' you were one or the other! They hid, they made do, and sometimes they committed suicide. With gender fluidity, it's the fluidity that is so interesting, not whether boys are wearing girls' shoes, and it doesn't escape market forces: as long as it only represents 5% of the global market – if indeed it does – there will only be 5% of collections that address this population. In fact, to be honest, I don't really address anyone in particular. And anyway, the standardized world has exploded!

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'Luxury groups make 3 million pairs of one model a year; I only make 3,000. I have no stock; nothing goes unsold – there's very little waste.'

‘Performing femininity was not on my list of things I thought I’d be good at.’

Reluctant fashion ‘icon’ and cult musician Leslie Winer reconsiders the places and times of her life less ordinary.

By Jerry Stafford
Photographs by Anton Corbijn

I first met Leslie Winer in about 1985, in London, where she was living on and off, between there, Paris and NYC. I remember, in no particular order her fearsome beauty, her acute intelligence, her acerbic wit. I remember her chalk-writing free verse on a black table in director John Maybury's Camden apartment, talking with her about French feminist writers like Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, and borrowing her floor-length pleated black Azzedine Alaïa coat to wear out to Leigh Bowery's night club Taboo.

I believe we shared a common interest in writers, in books and reading, and still do. I believe we share an enduring curiosity about the world and its absurdity and a deep love for our mutual friends. We met at a time when AIDS and drug abuse sadly stole many of these friends away from us and our shared memories keep these ghosts alive.

Back then I wasn't so aware of her 'iconic status' as a model. I had seen her picture in *Jill* magazine modelling BodyMap clothes when I was studying in Paris, but at that point I was doing a French degree at UCL and although I was of course into fashion and clubs, I was less aware of the business and how it worked. I don't think she did much modelling in London aside from some stuff for *The Face* and it was definitely not something that she talked about or validated. I think she went off and did it *elsewhere*, very discreetly.
I was more interested in her life in New York with the writers and artists she hung out with, including William Burroughs, Jean-Michel Basquiat or Ramellzee, and the music she was beginning to make with her then-husband Kevin Mooney, or with Sinéad O'Connor, with whom she collaborated on *The Lion and the Cobra*.

Don't get me wrong, of course I thought she was a fascinating beauty – convulsive would probably be the best adjective to describe her, like Breton's Nadja – but what was more fascinating was her disregard and mistrust of the physical, and of the business of seduction in general. Of course, she knew how to be photographed, or rather how *she* wanted be photographed – but it was purely a means to an end.

I became more aware of her 'reputation' and her genuine personal relationships with designers like Jean Paul Gaultier, Azzedine Alaïa and later Helmut Lang when I moved to Paris. There we worked together at film production company Première Heure, which is where she recorded her first demos – many of which ended up on her album *Witch* in one form or another – in a studio at Porte Dorée. In Paris, the fashion world treated Leslie very differently to the way my friends perceived her in London, although I also met and shared some of her closest friends who understood and appreciated that she was so much more than the diabolical persona that the 'business' had attributed to her! Friends like writer, DJ and musician Philippe Krootchey (RIP), her agents Frederika Levy (RIP) and Eric Busch, writer Paquita Paquin, hairdresser Julien d'Ys and photographer Dominique Issermann.

Above all, I remember the early creative development of her music in that little studio, connected to our 'office' at Première Heure by a small soundproofed door. I would sit at my desk and Leslie would work on tracks behind that door. We didn't always have an easy relationship at work and eventually Leslie left, but I think the most enduring and productive results of those months for her, banished to the wilderness of Porte Dorée, would be the experiments of these early demos. I remember how satisfied she was working in this way, in the dark, alone, hidden, self-sufficient, away from all the bullshit, just doing what she really loved to do.

Leslie Winer is a poet, a mother, a musicologist, a mycologist, a code breaker, a safe cracker, a herbalist, an ascetic, an arborist, and an intellectual. And yes, of course she is a badass for all the obvious, illustrious reasons. Like Rimbaud, she stands tall on the tavern table and pisses over the applauding patrons below.

Jerry Stafford

The place I was speaking about is in New York, London, Paris, Rome, Boston, Venice, St Louis.
—'Little Ghost', Leslie Winer

We are always the same age inside.
America is my country and Paris is my hometown.
Everybody gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense.
Anything scares me, anything scares anyone but really after all considering how dangerous everything is nothing is really very frightening.
There ain't no answer. There ain't gonna be any answer.
There never has been an answer. That's the answer.
—Gertrude Stein

Somewhere to the Left of the Middle of Nowhere, FR – The Present

Describe your street. Describe another. Compare.
—Georges Perec
I live in the *presbytère* attached to the village church. My companion was born upstairs. The street I live on is named (approximately) the Scourge of the Seas Street. Named in honour of a landlocked castle that some king gave his finest sea thief. The story goes. King's favourite pirate. Baby Doc bought it in the 1970s. Oh France, refuge of dictators, bad poets & jazz! Cue 'La Marseillaise'.

My favourite house is Robert Frank & June Leaf's house in Nova Scotia down an old dirt road.[1] My other favourite house is the one I live in. My favourite street is a street where I used to ride my 125 trail bike when I was a kid. Oxbow Lane. Livingston Taylor lived there & used to yell at me when I short-cutted through his property. It was encouraging. He had these three ridiculous chainsaw carved life-sized bears climbing a real tree at the end of his drive. It made it look like one of those Route 66 'gator farms & gift shops where you could buy a pickle from a barrel or a corn-cob pipe. If you were so inclined. If the spirit moved you. If you had a hankering for a large pickle from a barrel of brine some serial killer had probably just dipped his hairy murderous fingers into who knows how recently.

'*I'm dying for a pickle.*'

Can you describe the view from your work desk and on through to the outside of your house, the church, the square, its aspect and its history?
I'm looking at the two ancient yew trees that frame the door that leads outside the compound. I don't know their pronouns, but I spend most of my time with them. Our garden was the village burial ground at some point. One of my dogs used to bring us what looked a lot like a femur or a proximal phalange from time to time. Somehow not as creepy as one might expect. I like to imagine what this place looked like in the 12th century. We have a dog now who arranges his (non-human) bones in large circles in the garden. *Bonehenge*, he calls it. He's my favourite designer.

Can you talk about this home in Somewhere to the Left of the Middle of Nowhere, FR, which is your work place, your sanctuary, your refuge?
Sometimes I just see the things that need attending to. Other times I think: '*This would be the perfect house if one lived in the Keys or Panama or Montserrat…*' It's always freezing inside. There's usually a week in late July when a hot-water bottle is not essential. If you're lucky. It can be 100°F (Fahrenheit: the scale that makes no sense!) outside & it'll still be 53°F inside.

'Modelling was my side gig. It paid more than the Village Chess Shop where I put together games between angry Russian taxi drivers (50 cents!)'

I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library.
—Jorge Luis Borges

Is this true in your case?
Yes! When I look back at my life, at this point, from this vantage, I'm flummoxed & impressed by the intricate pattern revealed – by the spooky specificity of each detail that had to be carefully arranged in order for It to be Now. *Filigree of trade winds.* My partner's father was a book collector, literary critic & best friends with Violette Leduc [2]who did some of her best writing here, upstairs. He was also friends with Cendrars.[3] Henry Miller has one of the best chapters on Cendrars in his *The Books in My Life*, which is so good I've read it at least 20 times. Now I'm questioning the wisdom of even

mentioning it to anyone, never mind *here* in this fashion magazine where everyone pretends to complain about the fashion business. It's *that* good. But I think my secret's safe because 99% of people don't actually read. Anything. Especially fashionable people who pretend they are afraid to talk frankly about the fashion biz.

Paris

Arriving at each new city, the traveller finds again a past of his that he did not know he had: the foreignness of what you no longer are or no longer possess lies in wait for you in foreign, unpossessed places.
—Italo Calvino

When and how did you arrive in Paris for the first time?
I was already around 20 when I first came to Paris on my own. I had been living in NYC, attending SVA[4] & studying with Hannah Wilke & Joseph Kosuth.[5] I had already met Herbert Huncke[6] & was spending a lot of time with Burroughs at the Bunker during the afternoons.[7] Started doing a few things for Italian *Vogue* with Arthur Elgort. Modelling was my side gig, just something that happened. It paid more than the Village Chess Shop where I put together games between angry Russian taxi drivers (50 cents!), many of whom were ranked masters. Mostly angry. I remain an average chess player, at best. My friend Andrew's aunt owned the shop for years & Andrew financed his time at SVA by being the chess consultant on a long-running soap opera – can't remember which one – but he was there to make sure this ongoing TV chess game (which took place over a year!) was correct. I guess they didn't want sacks of mail from Midwestern housewives outraged by a faulty castling or rogue bishop.

What was your idea of Paris and how did it differ from the reality of the city?
I'm not sure I had any expectations, I was just going with the flow at the time. It seemed exactly how it should have seemed. I spent a lot of time wandering around like a free man in Paris.

How did you experience the criteria and conduct of the fashion industry when you began to work within its influence?
I'm not sure that my experience was typical. I worked right from the beginning so I never went through that go-sell-yourself-go-see process. I doubt I'd have been any good at that. I'm not a people person. No one has ever accused me of having a great personality. I'm not a sought-after dinner guest. I didn't want it. I didn't give a fuck. Not pretend not-give-a-fuck but like zero interest. Never crossed my mind as something I'd choose to do. When I was a kid I had hyperlexia, elective mutism & was only recently diagnosed with ASD, which explains a lot. Performing femininity was not on the top of my list of things I thought I might be good at. I still don't get it.

Who were your allies in the industry?
Uhm… I was pretty tight with Julien d'Ys, Freddie from City, Tony Viramontes, Teri Toye, Philippe Krootchey, you, Victor Fernandez…[8] Oddly enough Farida, Christine, Dominique Issermann, Claudia Hubrodos, Jeny Howorth[9]… I don't know, I'd have to think about it. It's like I've had six lifetimes in this one & I really haven't thought about that chapter for a long time.

You had close relationships with important designers like Azzedine Alaïa, Jean Paul Gaultier and later Helmut Lang.
If they were important at the time I didn't know that. I just liked them as humans because they were not false with me. Their energy matched their words. Three very different humans, all kind, creative & industrious. Azzedine was sweet. Gaultier was/is mischievous. Helmut (the human) was/remains an intellectual & an artist. All of them were supremely talented & equally as kind & generous with me. It seemed normal to me. People doing what they liked to do.

And with photographers like Peter Lindbergh, Jean-François Lepage, Mondino, Roversi... but not many women (aside from Issermann). Was this lack of a feminized gaze behind the camera a continual source of disappointment and frustration?
Didn't really think about it. I'd already hung around other women photographers like [redacted], with Bill King, on a more social level. If by social you mean driving around in a limo, stopping off at their coke dealer's mews house & going to the Anvil – then taking freaky pics with a street boy Bill picked up. With Issermann, I was mostly just friends, I never worked with her on the regular, but I would go to her house & watch films with her & Krootchey. It's the first time I saw any Cocteau films, Tati & all the FR classics. I'm thinking of *Au Hasard Balthazar*[10] right now. How 'bout you? As far as work – I'm not Issermann's type. She likes a body & a graceful line. I lack both of those & I have man hands. Huge. Hands. Man.

In my opinion some of her best photographs of women is the series/book she did of Marguerite Duras. Issermann never listens to my music. That I know of. We talk about other things. We talk about Leonard & we talk about Formula One racing, architecture, film & diseases.

And of course with your agent and friend Frederika Levy. Did she support and protect you? Did you need that?
Not sure I'm ready to weigh in on Freddie. That's a book. She singlehandedly *par hasard* changed fashion by entirely disregarding outmoded ideas of what a beautiful, interesting woman might look like. Extremely underrated. *Criminally* underrated. She lured me away from Elite fairly quickly after I arrived in Paris. I was at a café – she was sitting on the other side, staring at me & I said: '*What the fuck are you looking at?*' Turns out we were both waiting for a RDV with the same shady person. *Surprise!* It felt good to get away from those creepy-crawly Elite people – not just the men: all of them. Super creeps. They were going to 'fire' me from the agency when I cut my hair. *Oops.*

When I first came to Elite Paris they would have a bunch of the new '*girls*' go out to dinner at a fancy restaurant (cue Sinéad), so they could see who was good for 'pimping' out. I didn't make the cut. I already knew which fork to use.

It must also have been a quite 'exciting time in fashion' then as there was the Japanese invasion of designers like Rei Kawakubo and Yohji and you were up there with all that.
Yes, I liked Rei & Yohji. Still do. I liked not being able to talk to them because it's easier for me to really see someone when there's not a bunch of BS coming out of their mouths. I'm pretty sure I met them in Tokyo first, before they even came to Paris.

Also that portfolio of pictures you made with Peter Lindbergh in Paris including the one with the baby pram, with Anna Wintour as fashion editor! Any comment?
Peter was something else entirely. Easy-going. Kind human. I memorized his light set-up (when in the studio). I guess he was already important but, you have to remember, all this was well before supermodel days when he became whatever it was he became & fashion became what it became. At the time '*nobody was watching you, Mime*' (to quote *Majora's Mask*). I was a model for maybe five years total. I did do some stuff later with Italian *Vogue* with Franca S. & Albert Watson – by which time I already had two daughters. This was after I had started making music. Franca was very kind to me over the years. She never needed anyone else to tell her what to think. She took me to a lot of museums. She took me to (the other) Giacometti's studio for no reason. Not on work time. Because she knew.

I've never seen those Lindbergh photos except for the pram one, which I saw online.

Who or rather what were your enemies in Paris?
Most of my crimes were self-offence. I did have some weirdos who cut their hair like me & copied my clothes & sent creepy 'presents' to my agency. Stalkers, really. There were a lot of desperate models trying to 'make it' which hardly ever works. I guess it works now. It's kind of a pay-to-play situation now from the little I've seen. Either rich people's kids with extensive work or the '*I'll do anything for free for the exposure*' camp. So, the rich ones get paid crazy cash & the others work for the glory. Oh, the glory of it all!

Stephanie says – she wants to know – why she's given half her life to people she hates now.
—'Stephanie Says', Velvet Underground

Cities force growth and make men talkative and entertaining, but they make them artificial.
—R.W. Emerson

Comment…
Hmmmm. Emerson. Yes, I grew up in Massachusetts, so I have a particular penchant for New England writers. Oddly, I lived a street away from Anne Sexton when I was young & then on the street where Sylvia Plath grew up when I came

'I worked [as a model] right from the beginning so I never went through that go-sell-yourself-go-see process. I doubt I'd have been any good at that.'

'I liked Rei & Yohji. I liked not being able to talk to them, because it's easier for me when there's not a bunch of BS coming out of people's mouths.'

back to Massachusetts to take care of my grandmother. Steeped in the Transcendentalists, Emily Dickinson, Melville & Hawthorne. Spent much of my childhood swimming in Walden pond.

'*Have you ever read* The Marble Faun?' springboks to mind.

Dickinson's mother grew up in the same town I was born in & is buried next to my bio-family's plot. The plot thickens.

Spent a lot of time contemplating the fact that Emily Dickinson & the colonization of the Wild Wild West were happening at the same time. Made a song some years back called 'Half Past Three Cowboy' where I deconstruct her:

At Half past Three, a single Bird
Unto a silent Sky
Propounded but a single term
Of cautious melody.

At Half past Four, Experiment
Had subjugated test
And lo, Her silver Principle
Supplanted all the rest.

At Half past Seven, Element
Nor Implement, be seen —
And Place was where the Presence was
Circumference between.

Currently doing a version of:

Ashes denote that Fire was —
Revere the Grayest Pile
For the Departed Creature's sake
That hovered there awhile —

Fire exists the first in light
And then consolidates
Only the Chemist can disclose
Into what Carbonates.[11]

I imagine her, ever so occasionally, making the carriage ride from Amherst to Boston & as I recite the poem however many times, my Boston accent getting more prominent as she reaches Boston. '*Revere*' is particularly fulfilling in a hard Boston accent, *kid*. It sounds *wicked fuckin' cool*. Horse hooves. Wanted to use horse hooves ever since the mid-90s. One of my daughters was in the Boston Children's Opera & during rehearsals the rest of us'd take the drive-thru tour of Mount Auburn Cemetery. *I done the apple tree thing many times.* At the entrance they'd give you a cassette that had a clip-clop sound of a horse carriage during the parts in between the explanations of Mary Baker Eddy's monument & progressively less interesting dead people. *Clip clop, clip clop, clip clop.* I should have just kept it because I've spent years trying to track one down – but I also suspect that the one in my head may be better, like a lot of things.

You take delight not in a city's seven or seventy wonders,
but in the answer it gives to a question of yours.
—*Invisible Cities*, Italo Calvino

Did Paris answer the questions you posed her?
I'm not sure. I was fairly busy getting high. I lived on Rue d'Assas for a while, 112; 40 years later I still can't say *douze* properly. Or *roi*. One day I realized that Samuel Beckett lived nearby. I couldn't believe it. Every day I wasn't working I would go to La Coupole & watch him eat his lunch. The waiter kind of knew what I was doing so he'd set me up just the right distance away behind a plant or at a banquette at a perfectly discreet angle. Beckett was beautiful & looked, as everyone knows, like a magnificent bird of prey. I never talked to him. I ate the same thing every time. I'll leave it up to you to imagine what that might have been. *Like a common Malloy.*

'One day I realized that Samuel Beckett lived nearby. I couldn't believe it. Every day I wasn't working I would go to La Coupole & watch him eat his lunch.'

Was it in Paris where the necessity to start composing and recording your own music became imperative?
Yes, I think so. I had already been doing features on other people's records in London & after being able to sit in the control room with Trevor Horn[12] & seeing how he worked I figured I may as well learn how to work the recording console at Première Heure. We both know how good I wasn't at my job. So I started by reading the manual for the desk we had there: an Akai 12-track that saved to beta tapes! I wouldn't mind having one of those now – it had a warm warm ssssound that I liked. Yes, so, thank you Première Heure. He fired me soon afterward, but I had already recorded 'Kind of Easy' with Karl Bonnie from RSW.[13] The owner of PH hated the track & was completely dismissive of it & me. Hahahahahhahahaha. They had good food there for a while.

I saw him a few years ago at a viewing of Baillie Walsh's brilliant Springsteen film.[14] I fucking loved that Springsteen doc of Baillie's. When I tell people I like Springsteen, like LOVE him, they always laugh nervously like I'm being ironic (or moronic, some -ic) but I straight up Love him without reserve. Most Europeans think he's like Middle America at its worst. They think 'Born in the USA' is a pro-war song. They just don't get the Boss. But I do. Have you ever heard his version of Suicide's 'Dream Baby Dream'? I could make tracks for the rest of my life just sampling *Nebraska*.[15] Recorded on a 4-track! Impossible & sublime.

Of course, I have my own personal memories of your time spent in the studio at Première Heure, but is that that was 'where it all began'? That was where you laid down those first demos, some of which would eventually constitute *Witch*.
Yes, Jon Baker from Gee Street Records[16] heard 'Kind of Easy' & wanted to put Karl & me in the studio in London so we moved back there & went into the studio where we made 'When He Come Back' & 'Lost Flight'. F brilliant new tunes with Helen Terry[17] absolutely goosebump crushing it on b/r vox. She remains one of my favourite singers of all time. Unfortunately or fortunately, Jon Baker absolutely hated the tracks (what's he doing now, again?), but wouldn't give us the masters. Karl managed to steal the tapes back & then I signed to Rhythm King & made *Witch*.

Walkers are 'practitioners of the city', for the city is made to be walked. A city is a language, a repository of possibilities, and walking is the act of speaking that language, of selecting from those possibilities. Just as language limits what can be said, architecture limits where one can walk, but the walker invents other ways to go.
—*Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Rebecca Solnit

Yes, the walker invents other ways to go. I got kind of obsessed with the notion of desire paths for a while there. Desire paths are those deviation people-made paths that are most noticeable in a place that was designed to be family, housing & green friendly. Some poor landscape architect crippled by the anxiety of student-loan debt decides to put concrete pathways going from point A to point B. Everyone who is supposed to be using these pre-decided official pathways decides to make their own pathways from point A to point B – sometimes you can see the rational: shortcutting & so forth – but sometimes it's for no reason at all that you can see. Maybe principle. For some reason I'm thinking of Magnetic Fields' 'Railroad Boy' right now. No idea why.

I will not sing your ugly song.
I won't put on your ugly play.
I cannot join your ugly priesthood.

A city is a language. Is it a language you still try to speak or wish to understand?
Not any more.

How do you literally navigate your way around a city these days? What is your preferred mode of locomotion?
I like to spend a lot of time in the woods, either hiking, mushroom hunting or riding my neighbour's e-bike which seems to replicate the power I had when I was eight.

'Paris is a ho with a big bourgeois heart of gold that might be stolen by a ring of parkouring teenaged thieves who dream of being in Supreme ads.'

Paris is a woman but London is an independent man
puffing his pipe in a pub.
—*Lonesome Traveler*, Jack Kerouac

Haha… anything to say to that?
I go to Paris maybe three or four times a year. That's enough for me. It remains surprising that way. Parisians seem even more bourgeois than before. If such a thing be possible.

Just makes me think of William's musings on the British – paraphrased: '*If the British ever made it to the moon the first thing they'd do after disembarking would be to look around for inferiors.*'

Yeah, Paris is a ho with a big bourgeois heart of gold that might be stolen by a ring of journal-less parkouring teenaged thieves who dream of being in Supreme ads. Like all well socialized young people in this late-stage capitalist dystopia we're currently living in; if Twitter & social media are to be believed & s/wallowed in. If you don't know what they're

trying to sell you: the product is You. All these chumps creating free content for the feedlot overseers. Like, like, like. You're working for the man, people. You're giving it away. Bunch of chimps down by the nickel slots. '*Cute shoes.*'

London

All cities are mad: but the madness is gallant. All cities are beautiful: but the beauty is grim.
—*Where the Blue Begins*, Christopher Morley

Why did you go to London?
I went to London to stay with John Maybury[18] after we first met in Tokyo. He says I was dancing on a table but I have no memory of that. Seems doubtful. My dancing skills have not improved over the years. Unlike yours. Favourite photo ever. Insert here.

What did you find there? Art, music, hedonism, oblivion?
Tough question. I'm thinking of everything & it's a lot. I'm thinking of Fritz right now for some reason & maybe Alan. Alan – gone too soon – really the quiet unassuming leader of '*Pack of Fags*' as he called the posse. '*The Bronte Brothers.*' Baillie Walsh had newspaper names for all of you & his newspaper name for Alan was *The Observer.* Supremely talented, kind human, also mean AF when warranted. Secretive & sweet. Never the same since Fritz died. Sometimes he seemed like a wise old man & sometimes like a little kid.

Sinéad O'Connor, *collaboration on the track 'Just Call Me Joe' on* The Lion and the Cobra.
Ah, Sinéad. Voice of an angel. I don't know Sinéad all that well. Never spent any time alone with her or really even had a conversation of any note. She was either afraid of me or disliked me. She can throw it down though. Fact.

Trojan, *'Little Ghost'*
I met Trojan in Tokyo, a couple of years before I met Maybury there. It was in the middle of the night, I was walking down an empty street heading toward one of those hot canned coffee machines they have for no reason in the middle of residential areas. I could hear someone coming from the other direction

'I'd see Leigh Bowery on the late bus (him) dressed as a wedding cake. Kids'd give him shit, but they got a look at those rugby legs & thought better of it.'

I'm thinking of all the dead boys. Now.

Can you describe in one or two sentences each of the following people and your relationship with them, if any?

Leigh Bowery, *Taboo*
I was friends with Leigh because we had Trojan in common. Leigh was always super kind to me & I would often see him on the late bus (him) dressed as a wedding cake – I never remember him wearing the same thing twice. There'd be kids giving him shit, but then, somehow, they kind of always trailed off… maybe they got a look at those rugby legs & thought better of it. My favourite Leigh look was his daytime look. Grey wig askew, cardigan, cords & CLOGS. Extreme! No one's copied that look yet. I'm talking to you, Rick Owens.

John Maybury, *film collaborations*
What can I say about John Maybury? Best friends for quite some time. I can hear him painting.

Alan Macdonald, *Sage*
– but it can't be – I see a very large Little Bo Peep with sheep crook. Larger than it had to be on platforms with 14 petticoats & oversized shepherdess dress coming my way. Big puffy mutton dressed as lamb-leg sleeves. He was like: '*Alright?*' I was like, '*Uhm, yeah, how 'bout you?*' & we hung out for the rest of the time in Tokyo. The next time I saw him was in Camden Town at Maybury's. All this talk about Leigh, justifiable of course, all these designers still pilfering & deconstructing what Leigh did all those years ago – but Trojan was even more extreme in a lot of ways. I miss him most, sometimes.

Boy George, *covered the song 'Little Ghost'*
George. What can you say about George? Everybody loves George. Curiously. Both Leigh & Trojan could be particularly cruel about George, but who's to say? Also, they didn't discriminate. I did receive an odd e-mail from George a few years ago asking if he could borrow £500. I must have read that e-mail 50 different ways trying to figure out why George would, completely out of the blue, find my e-mail address & write to ask ME to borrow money. Maybe it was a joke. No idea. Did anyone else get one?

You initiated a long-enduring relationship with designer Vivienne Westwood when you were in London. And went on to work closely with her and her husband Andreas. Can you talk a little about what makes Vivienne Vivienne and what you and Andreas share in your friendship?
I knew Viv from the old Sex days & Malcolm, but I only really reconnected with her these past years since her partnership with Andreas Kronthaler. They are extremely kind people & not at all fashion-y. We talk about books or costumes. They made me a winter suit, which I wear every day. It's sort of based on a 1930s FR gentleman farmer's working suit in a wide whale corduroy. Thing'll last a few lifetimes. It's my Steve Jobs. Zero thought required. Got a million pockets. I can gather all the pinecones, boletus, chaga, birch polypores & morels without a bag. Mushroom pockets are mesh so the spores can proliferate more widely. I'm a very morel person. It has another pocket for a small hand axe. She gave me a computer bag some time back & last time I saw her she noticed it & said: '*I hate that bag!*' She don't pull punches, Viv, she says what she's thinking & she invites me to the Royal Albert Hall for Proms even though she can't hear all that well. I think it

New York

Did New York satisfy a desire or hunger for something you did not find elsewhere?
Not really. To survive in NYC in the late 70s I think you had to be pretty angry, which was easy at the time. I wasn't looking for anything specific, just looking around.

Who did you find there?
Rene Ricard, Jean-Michel, Edit deAk, Johnny Thunders, Bill, Huncke, Corso, Howard Brookner, Harry Smith & Cabel.[19] Dead friend A-list NYC. I was computer speaking with John Lurie some time back & we both figured out that we had never gone to see any film made about people we knew because the Wrongness was either too painful, ridiculous or anger inducing. The revisionism of it all. There's no shortage of '*best friends*' or '*experts*' you'll see elbowing their way to the coffin when someone's gone. Usually someone the person disliked when they were alive. It's like clockwork really.

Dirty Ears aims a knife at me, I pump him full of lost watches…

'Viv [Westwood] gave me a computer bag some time back & last time I saw her she noticed it & said: 'I hate that bag!' She don't pull punches, Viv.'

was Benjamin Britten & I could hear Miles in there. Clearly.

There's a huge chasm between how people see her & how she is.

We were in a room with some other people a couple of years ago & some clown there said to her: '*Did you know Leslie used to be married to….?*' & zero pause, Viv says: '*Never heard of him.*' End of story.

Child of Nova, story over.
—W.S.B.

I have been both a ghost and haunted in the city I love.
—Rebecca Solnit

If we were to talk about ghosts…
That's all I do some days. Most of my friends are dead.

Who haunts you and whom do you haunt?
I don't feel haunted. I like it when people visit me in dreams or suddenly appear. I feel my ancestors speaking through me when I manage to get out of the way. Writ large in the code.

—'Birthplace Revisited', Gregory Corso

Can you say something about Rammellzee as he is such an important figure of that time, yet remains little known to the most people?
I knew Rammell from Jean-Michel & we all used to hang out down the Roxy when Grandmaster Flash & Run & that scene was going on. ESG. All the people.

One night I went out to a New Year's party at the bunker – sort of an upstairs-downstairs type of affair put together by John Giorno[20] but with Bill's loft too. Huncke was like '*Let's quit this scene, man. I know of a better party.*' He really talked that way. Like he was still a hustler in Times Square c. 1948. Laughing here. So Huncke, Cabel (street boy & Civil War enthusiast) & I went to this other party. When we walk in there's this long coatrack for the guests' coats & Huncke's like '*Would you look at this coat? Gunmetal grey, soft & buttery.*' We go to the party, we leave. Next morning Huncke is out on 2nd Ave. yelling up to my window in the old Anderson Theatre[21] where I lived with the Fox Brothers. I go down & he has this bag. He's all fake guilty & saying '*I'm so embarrassed*

(not), *but I brought you this, try it on, try it on*.' It's the coat from the night before. I try it on. '*Like a glove!*' he says. Later that night I'm wearing this coat & heading down toward Crosby St. to Jean-Michel's – streets are dark & empty. Not anything like now. Two kids start trailing me saying '*Nice coat, nice coat, Papi…*' & I'm like '*Oh fuck, I'm gonna have to give this coat up*.' Next thing I hear is from in front of us: '*Hey girl, what's happening?*' It's Rammell in some crazy futurist outfit complete with ski goggles. He wore ski goggles All The Time. Needless to say, *reader*, I kept the coat.

There's old Herbert Huncke wearing someone else's overcoat.
—William S. Burroughs

With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.
—*Invisible Cities*, Italo Calvino

Tokyo

Did you spend much time in Tokyo or in Japan?
Yes. My agent there sent me to Kyoto & I went to the Nijo Castle. It has a wrap-around porch also made of wood & designed to make the sound of nightingales to ward off intruders. I think about that sound fairly often. We have nightingales here & owls. My daughters could imitate the owls & communicated with them when they were younger & we were looking at the night sky – a thousand stars deep.

Boston

'Memory's images, once they are fixed in words, are erased,' Polo said. 'Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all at once, if I speak of it, or perhaps, speaking of other cities, I have already lost it, little by little.'
—*Invisible Cities*, Italo Calvino

What is your relationship to the city of Boston? What 'language' does it speak and how do you navigate its influence on you?
My brother & I spent so much time imitating an extreme Boston accent that we kind of have one for real now – especially when together. My grandmother was horrified if she happened to hear us. There's nothing like an extreme Boston accent. It says *Everything*. There are words that only exist in Boston.

Rome

Rome wasn't deconstructed in a day.
—*Lost for Words*, Edward St Aubyn

I love Rome. I spent a lot of time with Jean-Michel there. It reminds us.

Does history interest or move you?
'L'histoire est écrite par les vainqueurs.' (Read: men.)

Do you 'enjoy' being photographed? Did you ever?

'People will say, 'Did you see Catherine Deneuve?' & I fucking certainly did not. Then they'll show me a photo on their phone of me standing right next to her.'

I find being photographed most awkward. I'm extremely stiff in photos & it's mostly an endurance test on my end of things. That's why I always say no unless they'll make it really rain. It was easier when I was younger & a heroin addict. *Gimme one good reason…*

When I do something now I always say upfront: '*No laughing, no acting happy, no jumping around, no smiling & no dancing*.' They agree & without fail comes that moment when someone says: '*Can you smile a little?*' (enraging!) or '*Get in there with the others & dance with abandon*' & I just stand there, stone-faced & wait it out. People like their women to be smiling, I've noticed. Or maybe everyone has to be happy now. I recently worked with a whole bunch of desperately happy people. All very impressed with their uniqueness that they imagine they've invented. There's a certain invisibility that's bestowed upon elders that smells like freedom to me.

Most interesting part of that job was meeting someone who had three kidneys. We talked for around five minutes at most & I'm not sure how it came up… but I think about it often. Three kidneys. That's a club I haven't been to. Money in the bank, kid. Cue: *Ace in the Hole* (Gloria Grahame version).

I have face blindness to a certain extent & have problems recognizing people if they, say, change their clothing or hair or anything really. Now that I'm older I just say hello to everyone & wave like some deranged overgrown American toddler & people I can't see or recognize probably just think I'm mentally compromised. Used to be thought a snob, now I'm wearing a helmet to prevent further head injury. People will say, after the rare event, '*Did you see Catherine Deneuve?*' & I fucking certainly did not. Then they'll show me a photo on their phone of me standing right next to her & I'll be astounded at how short she is & how big her head is in real life. Meanwhile I'll have also failed to notice Charlotte Rampling, who looks exactly like you'd expect her to look. You won't see *her* cosying up to the Pope, I'm pretty sure about that. You won't have to listen to *her* thoughts on the patriarchy or Brexit or intermittent fasting – though I'm sure she has a few.

What's it like being a woman drinking a cup of tea? What's it like being a woman walking down the stairs? is what I think when faced with music interviews & inevitably asked what it's like being a woman making music. Subtext being: how did a monkey change the oil on the pick-up?

'I occasionally reread a review of an EP I released under the name *Purity Supreme*, the best I've ever gotten, because the reviewer thought I was a MAN.'

Men who don't even make music will give me tips on how to improve my music. This happens, without fail, all the time. Still.

Here's a review of an EP I released with Christophe Van Huffel under the name *Purity Supreme* (after a horrendous Boston area supermarket where there'd always be a hair-covered piece of baloney stuck to one of the shopping cart wheels). I occasionally reread this review, the best one I've ever gotten, because the reviewer thought I was a MAN.

Purity Supreme – *Always Already* Review: ★★★★★
'The main attraction to the listener is the singing-intoning voice of the lead fellow, who may be the French half of the act. Cracked and dusty his vocal cords be, whether through mannered device or naturally desiccated, trying to convey the effect of a dissolute and broken man. Just right for followers of Wm Burroughs we might think, but this sort of prose-speak-sing also shades into areas once occupied by Nick Cave or Michael Gira, as does the lugubrious and dense content.

The lyrics are highly ambiguous, even when they seem straight to the point and use plain English at all times. I like to hear multiple repetitions of slightly mysterious phrases in songs and Purity Supreme does this trick very well. The first song keeps saying "It's Nice To See You", when the mood of the singer and indeed the music itself is expressing the exact opposite of that sentiment, and it's a song that wishes we would just go home and stay there. Angst-ridden steel strings and a relentless drum pattern make this snarky item a vicious twin brother to Leonard Cohen's later works. The second song is slightly more recognisable as something a weary Lou Reed might have recorded at any time between 1975 and 1988, and with its basic guitar and drum sound could almost pass for any decent slab of indie art-rock music.

On the flip, even more words and more repetitions in the two remaining songs. So many words, these songs are more like recited poems or short stories really, very much like a slightly nastier Tom Waits or what we might hear if Charles Bukowski turned his throaty husk to song. Indeed the words are privileged by appearing in full on the front cover. And there's a very strong cinematic component too, with vivid film noir images somehow encoded in the very sound of the record. Narrators alluding to scenes unknown, to backstories we cannot know, and delivered with a snarling curl to the lip at all times. The creators here are the French musician Christophe Van Huffel, and the American writer-composer Leslie Winer. Quite unusual, muscular, and opaque music from these offbeat modern beatniks.'

So, yes, that's what it feels like being a woman trimming the roses. *Slightly nastier Tom Waits*. I'll take it.

Origins

I would like there to exist places that are stable, unmoving, intangible, untouched and almost untouchable, unchanging, deep-rooted; places that might be points of reference, of departure, of origin.
My birthplace, the cradle of my family, the house where I may have been born, the tree I may have seen grow (that my father may have planted the day I was born), the attic of my childhood filled with intact memories.
—Georges Perec

Where were you born?

Massachusetts. I'm a Masshole (as people from New Hampshire call us) born & bred.

Where did you spend your childhood?
Massachusetts. Maine & the Cape in the summers. I don't miss the people but I do miss the land. I miss the woods & the ocean. I miss the animals, the mountains & the trees. I miss the coyotes, the bears & the fishers. I miss chipmunks. I miss kingfishers. I miss *Monotropa uniflora*, Indian pipe. I miss lady's slippers.

When did you decide to find out about your birth parents ?
When all my relatives I grew up with died.

Space melts like sand running through one's fingers.
Time bears it away and leaves me only shapeless shreds.
—Georges Perec

Work Now, Writing, Music, The Present

To write: to try meticulously to retain something, to cause something to survive; to wrest a few precise scraps from the void as it grows, to leave somewhere a furrow, a trace, a mark or a few signs.
—*Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, Georges Perec

When did you begin to write? Have you always been a writer?
I've been writing since I was four. My grandmother would give me poems to memorize & recite.
How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
—'The Swing', Robert Louis Stevenson

What has been the relationship for you between writing and technology? Your interest in computer language, in systems and algorithms has always seemed central to your discourse.
'*My machines came from too far away*' is the Richard Feynman quote I have etched into my machine flight cases. Some years ago I wrote Tim Berners-Lee an e-mail & he replied. We had us a dialogue which was helpful to me at the time.

When did you begin to write poetry?
From the beginning, & the word was Sound.

You now sometimes work with your daughter M on musical projects. How does it feel to share this process and sometimes the stage with your own?
Well, they are their own people. They'll throw me a bone once in a while. Unlike me, they all can sing & play anything. I love watching them sing. I love hearing them sing. They come from a long line of Irish travellers who did that for generations. They don't have any desire, as far as I know, to Be Somebody. It's an odd world we've left them.

I used to try to get them to sing old Irish songs they learned from their Granddad or slave songs their friend Kelli taught them. I'm sure this will offend someone. If it helps, I'm also wearing a fur coat & holding a .22 long rifle as I answer this question & eating some trophy elk jerky. I figured we could clean up, five girls singing on the corner in Harvard Square near Christmas, but they weren't having it. At all. They would break into five-part harmony in the car just to torture me. One of them, in particular, could do fake Spanish singing & I would have to pull the car over from laughing too hard.

'I find being photographed most awkward. It's mostly an endurance test on my end of things. It was easier when I was younger & a heroin addict.'

Do you enjoy the collaborative process?
Not really. Sometimes. Variable.

Can you describe the compilation that's being edited at the moment, the existing musical aspects, the people with whom you are working on new material, and the graphics you are developing with Linder Sterling…
Can't talk about it. Linder Sterling is an artist. *She do whatever she like…*

How do you experience live performance. Do you feel a connection to the audience?
I like it. It's a freaky thing to do. I'm not particularly good at it, but I like working with M & percussionist Gaëlle Salomon.

I cannot sleep unless I am surrounded by books.
—Jorge Luis Borges

Would you say that this is true in your case?
Well, I definitely can sleep out in the woods, where all books come from, so maybe *No*?

Maybe it was Anne Sexton who said. '*Writing poetry is like trying to make a tree out of used furniture*'.

Am I jumping around too much? Should I just dance on this table? Or should we just sit & listen to birdsong?

This is how space begins, with words only, signs traced on the blank page. To describe space: to name it, to trace it, like those portolano-makers who saturated the coastlines with the names of harbours, the names of capes, the names of inlets, until in the end the land was only separated from the sea by a continuous ribbon of text. Is the aleph, that place in Borges from which the entire world is visible simultaneously, anything other than an alphabet?
—*Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, Georges Perec

Have you constructed your world, the spaces through which you have moved in life, uniquely with words?
Yeah, we make it all up. You know that.
'*She do whatever she like… make people so mad …*'

I am not sure that I exist, actually. I am all the writers that I have read, all the people that I have met, all the women that I have loved; all the cities I have visited.
—Jorge Luis Borges

I'd woken up early & took a long time getting ready to exist.
—Fernando Pessoa

Do you exist?

I don't rightly know. *Just a dream some of us had.*
Maybe.

Photography assistant: Stan Rey-Grange

1. Robert Frank (1924-2019), the Swiss-born photographer nd documentary filmmaker, married US artist June Leaf in 1975. Leaf specializes in abstract allegorical paintings and drawings, as well as modernist kinetic sculpture.

2. Violette Leduc (1907-1972) was a French author.

3. Frédéric-Louis Sauser (1887-1961), also known as Blaise Cendrars, was a Swiss-born modernist novelist and poet.

4. SVA or the School of Visual Arts is an art and design college in Manhattan, New York; it was founded in 1947 by Silas H. Rhodes and Burne Hogarth.

5. Hannah Wilke (1940-1993), was an American feminist painter, sculptor, photographer, video artist and performance artist. Joseph Kosuth is an American conceptual artist.

6. Herbert Edwin Huncke (1915-1996) was a US writer and poet credited with coining the term 'Beat Generation', of which he was a member. Leslie Winer is co-editor of Huncke's estate.

7. The Bunker was the name writer William S. Burroughs gave to the windowless former-YMCA locker room he kept as a pied-à-terre at 222 Bowery in Manhattan from 1974 to 1997.

8. American artist, fashion illustrator and photographer Tony Viramontes (1956-1988) is now perhaps best known for his cover art for Janet Jackson's album *Control*. In the 1980s, transgender model Teri Toye was an 'it-girl', nightlife personality and muse to the fashion designer Stephen Sprouse. Philippe Krootchey (1954-2004), aka Krootchey, was a French musician, radio personality and television presenter during the 1970s and 1980s.

9. Jeny Howorth is a British model, famous in the 1980s for her bleached-blonde crop cut, styled by Sam McKnight.

10. *Au Hasard Balthazar* (1966) is a highly regarded French-Swedish drama film directed by Robert Bresson, that follows the fortunes of a donkey.

11. Emily Dickinson's 'Ashes Denote that Fire was' is Poem CXIII in the 'Life' section of her *Complete Poems*.

12. Trevor Horn (born 1949) is an English bassist, singer, songwriter and music producer. He pioneered the sound of the 1980s through his production work with artists including Yes, ABC, Malcolm McLaren, and Frankie Goes to Hollywood. He produced Seal's global 1994 hit 'Kiss From a Rose'.

13. RSW or Renegade Sound Wave was an influential UK electronic music group active from 1987 to 1995.

14. *Springsteen & I* is a 2013 biographical documentary feature directed by Baillie Walsh that narrates the life of Bruce Springsteen from the perspective of his fans worldwide.

15. The track '1nce Upon A Time' on Leslie Winer's 1990 album *Witch*, samples 'State Trooper' from Bruce Springsteen's 1982 album *Nebraska*.

16. Founded by Jon Baker in 1985, Gee Street Records was a British hip-hop record label. It released the influential and commercially successful rap album *Straight out of the Jungle* by the US group Jungle Brothers and P.M. Dawn's hit 'Set Adrift on Memory's Bliss'. Baker is now a hotelier in Jamaica.

17. Helen Terry is a British singer and backing vocalist for Culture Club; she recorded a hit single as a solo performer with 'Love Lies Lost' in 1984.

18. John Maybury is a British filmmaker and artist. He directed the music videos for 'Nothing Compares 2 U' by Sinéad O'Connor and 'West End Girls' by the Pet Shop Boys.

19. Rene Ricard (1946-2014) was an American poet, actor, art critic, and painter. Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988) was an artist. Edit DeAk (1948-2017), also deAk, born Deak, was a Hungarian-born American art critic and writer. Gregory Corso (1930-2001) was an American poet and youngest writer of the Beat Generation. Howard Brookner (1954-1989) was an American film director. Harry Joseph Smith (1936-2012) was an American US poet and editor.

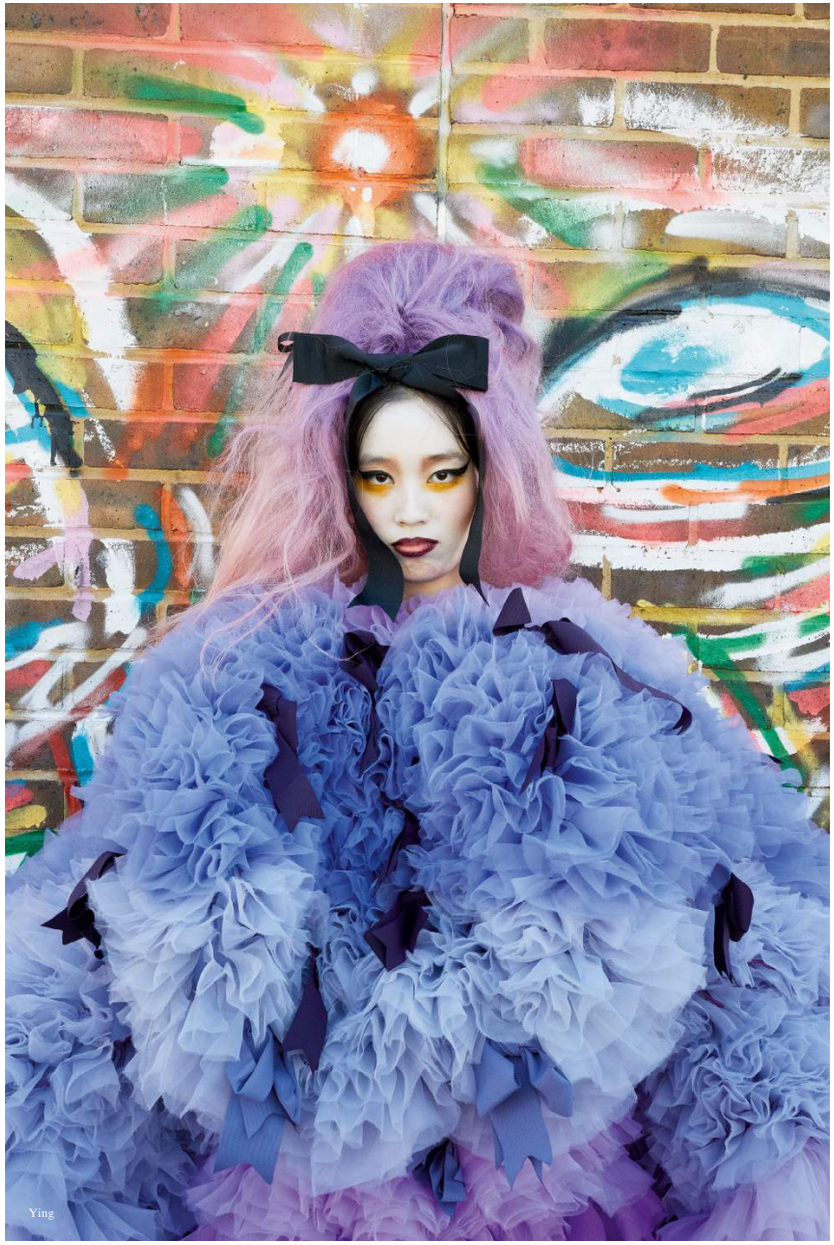
20. John Giorno (1936-2019) was an American poet and performance artist.

21. For a few months in 1968, the Anderson Theater at 66 Second Avenue in Manhattan was a key venue in the East Village music scene, and from 1977 to 1979, it hosted acts including Patti Smith and Talking Heads.

‘There’s not much call for big gowns in Tokyo.’

Japanese costume designer Tomo Koizumi’s ‘brightly coloured fluffy creations’ have left fashion all in a daze.

By Hans Ulrich Obrist
Photographs by Juergen Teller
Styling by Vanessa Reid



Ying

Niko Riam

Hans Ulrich Obrist

Charlie Fox

Niko Riam

Victoria Sin

Lily McMenamy

Jenn Nkiru

Charlie Fox

Victoria Sin

Lily McMenamy

Jeongmo Ku

Jenn Nkiru

Lily McMenamy

Jenn Nkiru

Creative partner to Juergen Teller: Dovile Drizyte. Models: Charlie Fox, Jeongmo Ku, Lily McMenamy, Jenn Nkiru, Niko Riam, Victoria Sin, Ying. Hair stylist: Syd Hayes. Make-up artist: Miranda Joyce. Executive producer: Emanuele Mascioni. Producer: Samira Andersson. Photography assistant: Karin Xiao. Post Production: Catalin Plesa @ Quickfix Retouch. Styling assistant: James Chester. Hair assistant: Paula McCash. Make-up assistant: Phoebe Taylor. Production assistants: Tommaso Albertini, Annabel Snoxall.

At New York Fashion Week in February 2019, Tomo Koizumi's surprise show became the fillip the industry seemed to need. Organized with a little help from Katie Grand, Gwendoline Christie, Pat McGrath and Guido Palau, and staged in Marc Jacobs' Madison Avenue store, the Japanese designer's ruffled collection of dresses was a perfect flurry of colour, good humour and sheer exuberance. In the months that have followed, the clothes have been spotted all over social and traditional media – from Instagram to the glossies – and after being worn on the Met Gala red carpet, have been transformed from costumes to real-life fashion. And Koizumi, a costume designer by trade, had become an overnight fashion star. In July, *System* asked Hans Ulrich Obrist to catch up with the designer and see how he was dealing with all this new-found attention. The ensuing conversation was a real-time study of a man feeling his way forward, slowly working out just where his next steps would take him. The first, however, was to Juergen Teller's neighbourhood, where the photographer shot Koizumi, Obrist and some friends wearing the dresses. The results resemble Koizumi's work: kaleidoscopic, joyous and an awful lot of fun. But before anything else, a word from one of the people at the heart of the Tomo phenomenon, Katie Grand, the editor in chief of *LOVE*: 'Tomo is one of those special people who accidentally come into your life and then firmly plants their feet there. As it's now widely known, I was introduced to Tomo's creations by Giles Deacon via Instagram, and then shortly afterwards, I persuaded Marc Jacobs to host a show in his uptown store. Marc never doubted Tomo's brilliance and loved his brightly coloured fluffy creations from the moment he saw them, too.

Once at the studio, Tomo and his work became a usual sight on the ninth floor – the Marc showroom is black and Tomo's pieces are usually bright. His cheery charm and innocent humility was infectious – even though his clothes take up quite a lot of space. It's funny how the pieces arrive packed down into boxes and he and his team spend days rigorously "fluffing" the fabric with wire gloves to get the volume.

I adore working and collaborating with him; he's an absolute joy. It was also super special to bring in Ariel Nicholson this latest season to be the sole muse of the collection. And as ever it was a pleasure to spend time and be so spoiled working with Pat McGrath and Guido Palau at the beginning of the season to create such special looks.'

Hans Ulrich Obrist: It feels like you suddenly appeared! How did you come to fashion or did fashion come to you?

Tomo Koizumi: I work as a costume designer in Tokyo, making stage costumes for Japanese or Asian singers, as well as for advertising. So I see myself as half in the fashion industry and half in the entertainment industry. That is why I make these kinds of big, loud, colourful, eye-catching costumes. I first decided to be a designer in 2004; I was 14 and found a picture of Galliano's work for Dior. Suddenly, fashion could mean bigger, extra-special things, and that is what I have always made since.

What did that image trigger in your 14-year-old mind?

Before I found that picture, I already liked to wear stylish clothes, but it was just my own personal thing. After that picture, it suddenly stopped being like normal life. I was a sad teenager and that felt like comfort and encouragement.

Did it feel like it opened up the possibility of a new world?

Yes. I lived in a closed community in the countryside; I didn't even have access to the Internet, so I couldn't meet anyone new easily. I only had a few friends at that time and then when I was 14, I also realized that I was gay. It all happened at the same time: I found out I was gay and I found that Galliano picture. Two really big things happened to me at the same time, the same moment. After that, I started going to clubs, when I was 15 or so, and met some new and really different friends, from the gay community. It was really interesting and it influenced me a lot. In the club, there were so many drag queens; it was so different to normal life – I could escape from daily life.

Who are your other heroes or heroines in fashion?

Galliano at Dior is my favourite, and the brand is still my favourite. I still think it's great. I've always dreamed about haute couture and fantasy. Of course, like lots of European designers and fashion students, I really like Japanese designers like Yohji [Yamamoto], but I've always been particularly obsessed with the British-educated designers.

'I make stage costumes for Japanese or Asian singers. I see myself as half in the fashion industry and half in the entertainment industry.'

I was told you are inspired by Leigh Bowery.

Of course! I found pictures of him in a magazine a year or two after that Galliano picture. It was all connected because Galliano was obviously heavily inspired by Leigh Bowery. I loved the movie called *Party Monster*. I think I saw that when I was about 16 or 17. That kind of inspiration influenced me a lot.

And art? Your designs are really sculptural, so I wondering if you have been inspired as much by art as by fashion?

I actually majored in art when I was at university. My fashion technique is all self-taught; I didn't study fashion at all. At university, I did everything: painting, graphic design, sculpture, and art education. I'm actually qualified as a teacher, but I don't want to be one! I wouldn't say I have that much knowledge about art, but I do like to go to museums. I like to use inspiration from artworks, in particular, the colours in paintings.

Which paintings?

Mark Rothko is really good to take colours from, as is Georgia O'Keeffe. I really like blended colours and different shades, and those two have blended colours. That's why I really like O'Keeffe.

Did you go to university in Tokyo?

No, in Chiba, which is next to Tokyo, the next-door prefecture, but still the countryside. I could go to Tokyo any time I wanted, but my hometown is still surrounded by rice fields and rivers.

We often think of fashion as being an urban affair. How did the countryside inspire you and your fashion?

I have these images of nature in my memory and there were so many colours in the sea and forests around my home that I still love. I also had traditional Japanese things around me, like Japanese dolls. Also, [manga] cartoons influenced me a lot. Like *Sailor Moon* – that I really loved, and it really inspired me. Growing up in the countryside made me more desperate to be known and do something big. I didn't know about actual fashion until I discovered those Galliano pictures and suddenly thought, 'Everything in fashion must be like that'! I actually dreamed of being an assistant to Galliano; it was one of my biggest dreams at that time. I would hunt down articles about him in fashion magazines that I used to buy.

You thought that because it was the first thing you saw?

Yes, that is why I have been following this stream until now. Also, I really want to follow that fantasy into the future because it was a really big shock to me and it changed my life.

I've heard that Miko girls were also important to your work and inspiration.

Traditionally, the Miko were young women who were like shamans; they were sort of not-human. They were mystical and did many things, like telling the future and dealing with funerals in shrines, so normal people both needed them and discriminated against them. There was a double standard. I started researching Miko because my family works as undertakers and in Japan, people working with the dead are a little bit discriminated against because death is kind of dirty and taboo. People don't want to be in touch with death. That gave me a first connection with the Miko. Then their costumes are really beautiful and really Japanese: religious outfits with unique details. I've been inspired by certain details in Japanese funeral ceremonies, which feature lots of flowers and take place in temples. When I was really young, like four or five, I would go to temples and see these funeral ceremonies, so it all feels really natural to me.

How did you first become a costume designer? Was it your first step as a professional? It would be really interesting to hear about the costume designs that preceded your first collection.

I began designing costumes because there is not much call for big gowns for galas in Tokyo; there is not that culture. But I still really wanted to make big gowns, so that is why I found a way to work in the entertainment industry. I started working as a costume designer over seven years ago, when I was 23 or so, when I was still at university. It was for a Japanese singer called Miliyah Kato who had a sort of Harajuku style, a really famous Japanese singer who wanted to be Harajuku cute.

Were these commercial jobs?

Yes, all commercial jobs. This was one with a group in a Harajuku-style café called Kawaii Monster Café in Tokyo and they were pretending to be working there, serving dishes dressed in these ruffle costumes. It was crazy. This was

'I was about 14 when I found a picture of Galliano's work for Dior. It was a really big shock to me and it changed my life forever.'

in 2016. Lady Gaga wore a dress of mine when she was in Tokyo that year – that was a big moment for me. I began doing the ruffle dresses four years ago.

Tell us about the technique. What fabric do you use?
It started when I found this Japanese polyester organza fabric in a market. It's cheap, but really good quality, and it comes in 170 different colours, so I immediately wanted to do something with it. I felt I could create something really gorgeous with it and I loved all the possibilities of those colours. I tried a lot of techniques – and I failed many times. Then I found this ruffle technique about three years ago.

It is like an organza extravaganza!
Yes, yes!

What is your favourite colour?
With this technique, I like lighter colours. Pastels work better than dark colours, so I use soft colour shades with neon colours, which works so well. Sometimes I use some darker colours around the waist because it makes it look a little tighter; that's a costume-design technique.

This extravaganza was originally designed for a singer?
Yes, a Japanese singer called Yuki; she is really famous for being really fashionable in Japan. I was so honoured to work with her.

You had collections before New York, but you didn't show them?
Yes, it was all one-off pieces that I made to show stylists – or the world! – what I could do. I had made these costume samples and then Lady Gaga wore one look.

Has Björk ever worn your clothes?
Not yet, but Björk is my biggest muse, so I really want to dress her.

She is my friend, so we can make the connection. I will send her a message tonight. Do other people besides performers wear your clothes? Have you dressed men?
I don't do menswear, but boys look really cute in my dresses. Actually anyone can fit into my clothes. And anyone can look cute in my dresses.

I hear that you don't delegate the making at all, that you do a lot of the sewing yourself.
Yes, yes, so much. When I really focus a lot, I can sew for maybe five hours without stopping. As I've mainly been a costume designer, I'm really used to tight deadlines and not having much time to deliver. That's why I've always done everything by myself or maybe with just one assistant. Also, I only do what I can do; I make the amount I can make. I have to handle everything almost by myself and my studio is really tiny.

Really, for all these big dresses?
Yes, and there are many big tables and sewing machines. I did a Met Gala dress two weeks ago which was really big – my studio was filled up with that dress.

How did that that Met Gala dress happen? It was like a creature!
Right after the show I did in February, Nichapat Suphap, who works for *Vogue Thailand* and is Thai, e-mailed me and we met in New York. She asked me to make a Met Gala dress for her, which was one of my biggest dreams, so I was really happy. Plus, she is a client so she can pay for the dress, so I was even happier!

You are featured in the exhibition *Camp: Notes on Fashion*, which was also the theme of this year's Met Gala. What is camp for you?
I have never considered my design to be particularly camp, but people often find something camp-y in what I do. If I express myself and create something, it has to be different to other designs and it has to be joyous; it has to be fun. So perhaps my designs really are camp. I really loved the exhibition, though, because every piece was really different, but really fun. I was smiling looking at every design.

Giles Deacon and Katie Grand were instrumental in changing the course of your trajectory. You had a small Instagram following, but then all of a sudden you were doing a show in New York and then making a dress for the Met Ball. How did that happen? How did Giles Deacon end up putting you on his Instagram? How did it all begin?
In the middle of last year I had finished a big project in Japan, and was feeling that I wanted to do something different; something more exciting, so I tried to… I don't how to say it… to push myself out to the world. Last September I got the chance to create a presentation for a journalist called Sara Maino, who is at *Vogue Italia*. She posted my work on her Instagram and then it was reposted and then reposted, and then Giles Deacon started following me. I think he showed my work to Katie Grand and then *Love* magazine contacted me to borrow some dresses for a shoot. Shipping them to London made me so happy. That was all around the end of last year. Then I posted a picture on my Instagram, this was actually with the actress Gwendoline Christie, who was in my show, the last look. Then Giles Deacon re-posted this picture on his Instagram, and in doing so introduced my works to his followers. Then Katie Grand texted me. That DM is still my screen saver! It was like 3am in Tokyo and I was so surprised. I immediately texted her back to say, 'Thank you so much, I can bring some more new designs for your shoot.' In that 15 minutes of chatting, we decided to do a show.

So Katie began to organize the show, Marc Jacobs offered to host it in the store on Spring Street during New York Fashion Week, Guido Palau offered to do the hair, Pat McGrath the make-up, Jin Soon Choi the nails, and Katie put together a dream cast of models: Bella Hadid, Emily Ratajkowski, Karen Elson, Gwendoline Christie and Joan Smalls. Can you tell me about the whole saga of that first show?
Everything was directed by Katie Grand; I just turned up with my clothes. I met her for the first time in New York in Marc Jacobs' studio. I was really nervous because New York is not my favourite city. I had only visited once before that show; I didn't have friends there. So I was kind of desperate to find people I could ask for help there. Then a friend introduced me to some people at Parsons School, so I could get some help. After meeting Katie, I was relaxed, I could just focus on my own thing. The support I got from Marc Jacobs' team was amazing. Everyone in the show was so professional; I didn't have any problems and I was able to just enjoy it. After the show I was really tired and I thought I would have time to just relax and do some sightseeing in New York, but things got really crazy busy; everything was a rush. I mean, I didn't have the pricing for the clothes or anything. I honestly wasn't thinking about retail. I just didn't know what was going to come afterwards.

Where are you going to take your technique? Your style has been getting more complex, more colourful and sculptural, so how is it going to evolve? Are you already working on the next collection?
I will start on a new collection when I get back to Tokyo; I already have an idea, which will be more presentation and less fashion show. I still don't really have anything to sell, which I am happy about because I don't need that much money to keep my team. I do have some new clients in the real world, but I want to do everything slowly; I really don't like being stressed. In the fashion industry everything is really quick, but I still want to show something new and something different to the world. I will do a presentation for next season, but it will not be for sale. I really want to maximize my own brand. I think I can do that now. I'm also thinking about perfume because while not everyone can wear my bigger gowns, people still want something from my brand, so maybe they can wear perfume. That could be a good way to connect people to my brand.

How would you define fashion now?
To me, fashion and the fashion industry are two different things. I always thought that fashion shows were filled with lots of show pieces that weren't made to be sold; that's what I thought fashion was about. But there aren't many of those kinds of pieces any more in fashion shows, which I find very sad. Everything is really commercial now; of course, they have to sell pieces, but they should also be delivering or serving up a fashion fantasy to the world.

Instagram was key to you being discovered and you use it to post your work and inspirations. What does the app mean to you and what is the Internet's role for you as a fashion designer?
The things that have happened to me prove that with the Internet and Instagram, you can make something unique or special and then get yourself out there in the world; it means people can find you and then perhaps take you to the right place. My story is like a lesson to younger generations or younger designers that even if you live in the middle of nowhere – not in London, Paris or New York – you can get yourself known. If my story can give some hope to young designers, then I am so happy.

What was your most recent dress?
My most recent dress was for a client in

'I don't do menswear, but boys look really cute in my dresses. Actually anyone can fit into my clothes. And anyone can look cute in my dresses.'

'After the first show I was tired and I thought I'd have time to just relax and do some sightseeing in New York, but things got really crazy busy.'

Tokyo last week. It was in ruffles in different materials, and it was metallic. It was a bit different to other dresses.

Do you have any unrealized projects or dreams?
My dream project would be to have my own exhibition in a museum. The Metropolitan was one of my biggest dreams, so I already got that with *Camp*, and the Met Gala is big for all fashion designers – and I am not that big a designer.

You have said you would like to do a capsule collection of ready-to-wear. Where are you with that?
I was talking with many buyers about making a capsule collection or ready-to-wear, but during the conversations I discovered that I am not ready yet. I could produce something for sale if I wanted to, but I don't feel like this yet and selling things is really difficult. Also, I want to do things differently to other younger designers, other designers; that is why I don't do this now. I still want to contact and connect with buyers, and I want to show something to them, so that in few seasons' time I could still work with them. I am talking to them, but I haven't worked out anything yet.

Do you feel part of a fashion design group in Japan? Do you have friends in fashion?
I don't have any designer friends in Japan, maybe more in Europe. I don't know why; perhaps because I didn't go to fashion school, so I have always hung out more with make-up artists and gay friends. I don't know many people in the fashion industry in Japan. I only know stylists who I've worked with. Things have changed in these past few months, but I am still independent.

Are you interested in the history of fashion? The clothes you presented at the New York show made me feel like you knew about the history of fashion.
For the last collection I used some silhouettes from Dior and Balenciaga; I don't know if people saw that or not. I really wanted to do something new that was also historical. About fashion history, I don't think that my ruffle technique is that new and my way of using colours is not unique to me. The ruffle technique, for example, was used by Hussein Chalayan and Jean Paul Gaultier, maybe even Jean Patou. I really love his designs. I am not sure I did anything new, but if people say that my designs are really new or joyous and fun, that is always nice to hear. I really admire British-educated designers like Galliano, like Alexander McQueen, Christopher Kane, Marios Schwab; they all come from Central Saint Martins and so London was the first foreign city I visited.

Do you think it is important for a designer to get a job at a big fashion house, like Galliano and McQueen did?
Of course. Working for a big house means being able to see their archives or look at their history, and that is really interesting for a designer. It must be really difficult, but I would love to try it if I can.

When you think about you own brand, do you have a clear idea in terms of business and financially of what you want it to look like?
Until now, I have always felt like I really want to keep my team small because a bigger team means bigger costs, so I would have to do things that I wouldn't want to do to earn money. At the moment I am happy to make only one piece as a sample that can go out into the world on Instagram. Then clients can order one if they like it. I don't really have anything to sell like other brands.

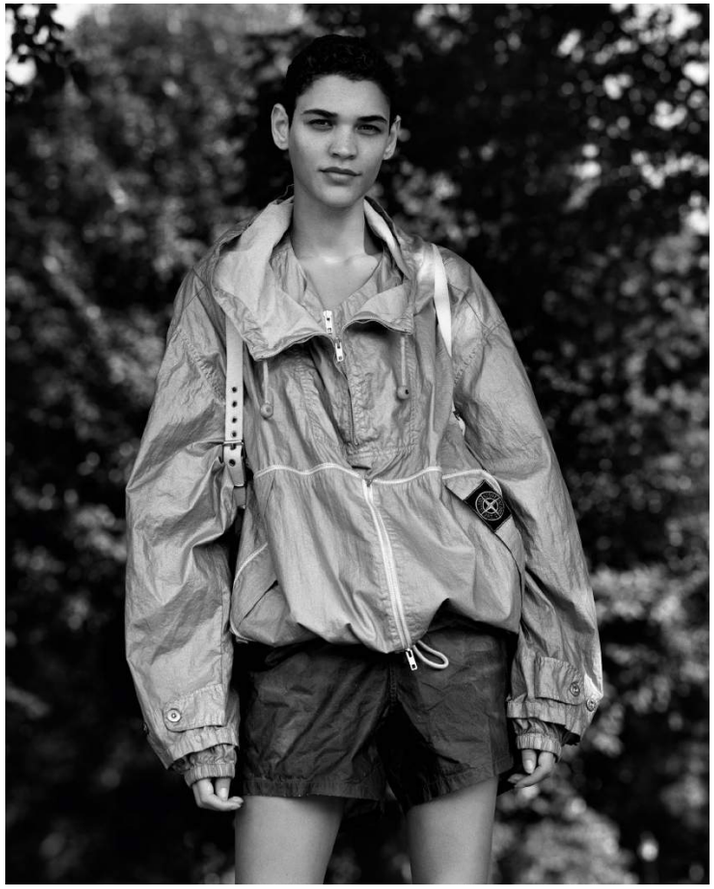
Japan and Japanese fashion have this incredible way of looking at things that exist in cultures, in Western or European cultures and remixing them. Do you feel you do that?
I think Japanese brands or Japanese designers are really good at that mix and match of cultures and elements to make wearable designs. That's what Undercover does and I really love their designs. Since the beginning I have really wanted to do something different from international designers. It was almost too big to think about, but I have always tried to do things differently. That thought maybe makes my design different to other Japanese designers.

Not really selling anything is quite subversive today when so much is governed by commercial ambition. I suppose working as a costume designer gives you the space to think about your own designs that may have a commercial future, but at your own pace. What do you love about costume design?
I love it because I get to meet the client face to face, and because you are making clothes that will be worn on stage. Watching singers with real attitude wear my clothes on stage is just really fun – and it makes me really happy.

The clothes tags stated it clearly: ‘Ideas from Massimo Osti.’

There’s nothing nostalgic about fashion’s enduring love of vintage Stone Island.

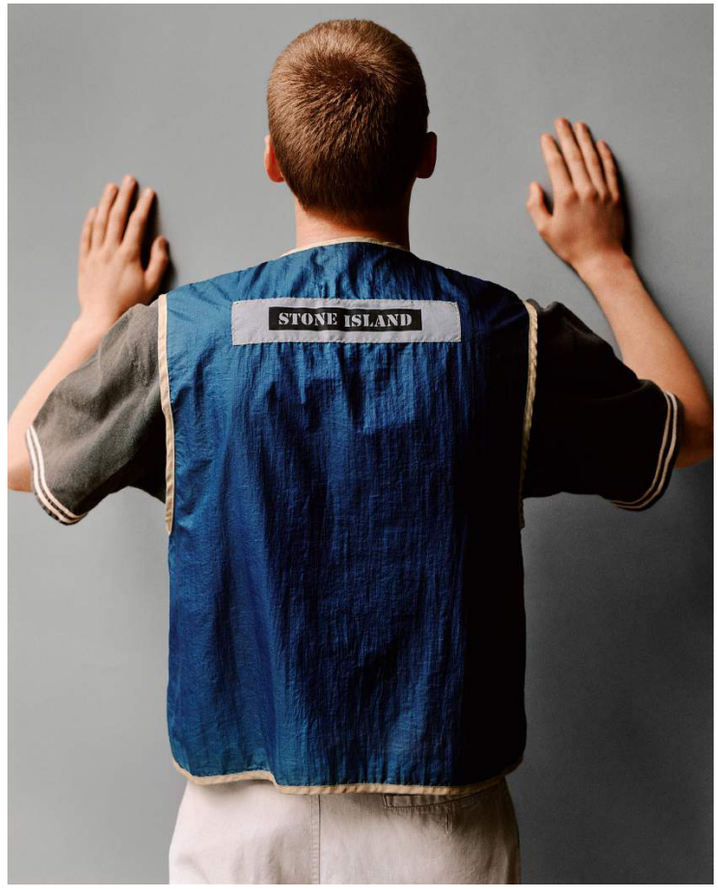
By Angelo Flaccavento
Photographs by Alasdair McLellan
Styling by Max Pearmain



Previous page, from left to right:
Tela Stella reversible vest (Spring/Summer 1993).
Navy fleece-lined side-collar sweatshirt (Autumn/Winter 1983), white ribbed heavy-cotton sweatshirt (Spring/Summer 1992),
Marina thermo-sensitive swim shorts (Spring/Summer 1989), Marina work boots (Autumn/Winter 1985).
Jersey pigment-print T-shirt (Spring/Summer 1992), cotton-hemp Rep pigment-print shorts (Spring/Summer 1986),
all Bratsk Archive. Socks, Falke. Trainers, Nike.

Above:
Nylon Metal packable jacket (Spring/Summer 1986), Marina thermo-sensitive swim shorts (Spring/Summer 1989),
and Raso Gommato Marina backpack (Spring/Summer 1986), all Bratsk Archive

Roll-neck neoprene-fleece sweater (Autumn/Winter 1989)
and Marina Tela Stella vest (Spring/Summer 1992),
both Tela Fell Archive



Left:
Jumbo-cord shirt (Autumn/Winter 1993) and jersey deck vest (Spring/Summer 1984), both Tela Fell Archive

Above:
High-visibility vest with reflective detail and rubber-plaque heavy-cotton T-shirt (both Spring/Summer 1989), and Tela Stella trousers (Spring/Summer 1983), all Bratsk Archive

Above:
Cotton-jersey T-shirt with reflective arc print (Spring/Summer 1992) and Ice ski salopettes with braces (Autumn/Winter 1987), both from Tela Fell Archive. Socks, Falke. Shoes, vintage Polo Ralph Lauren from Carlo Manzi

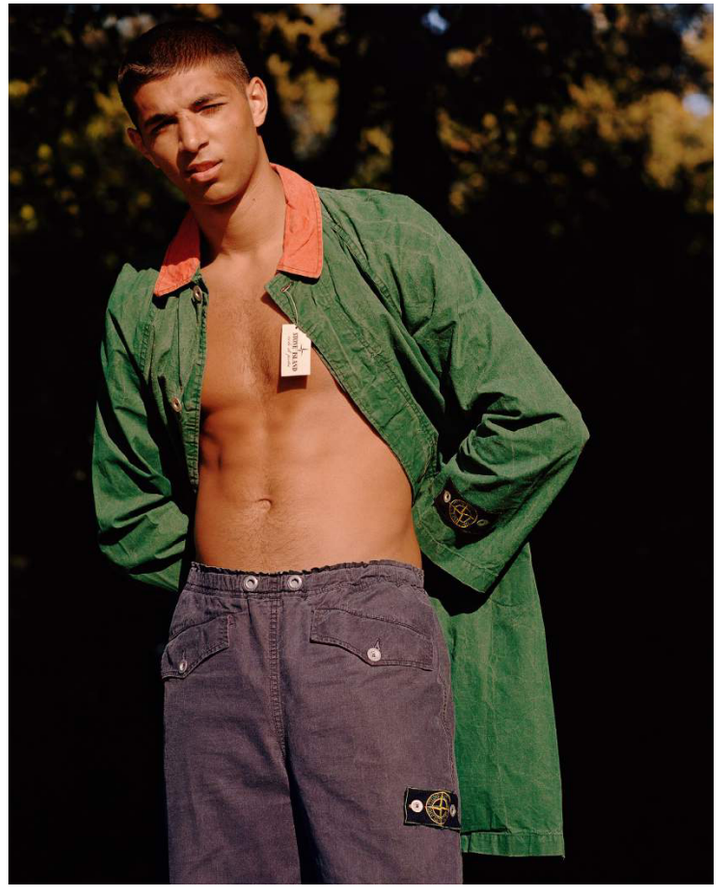
Right:
Glazed-silk 'toffee-wrapper' light jacket (Autumn/Winter 1992), fleece neck-zipped sweater (Autumn/Winter 1993), and patch-badge jeans (Spring/Summer 1988), all Bratsk Archive

Left:
Marina Ice sailing jacket (Spring/Summer 1988), Tela Fell Archive

Above:
Life Saver swimming trunks (Spring/Summer 1992), Tela Fell Archive

Above:
Reflective balaclava jacket (Autumn/Winter 1993) and jumbo-cord trousers, both Tela Fell Archive

Right:
Printed cotton Oxford shirt (Spring/Summer 1992), Japan-exclusive T-shirt (Spring/Summer 1988), and Tela Stella trousers (Spring/Summer 1983), all Bratsk Archive

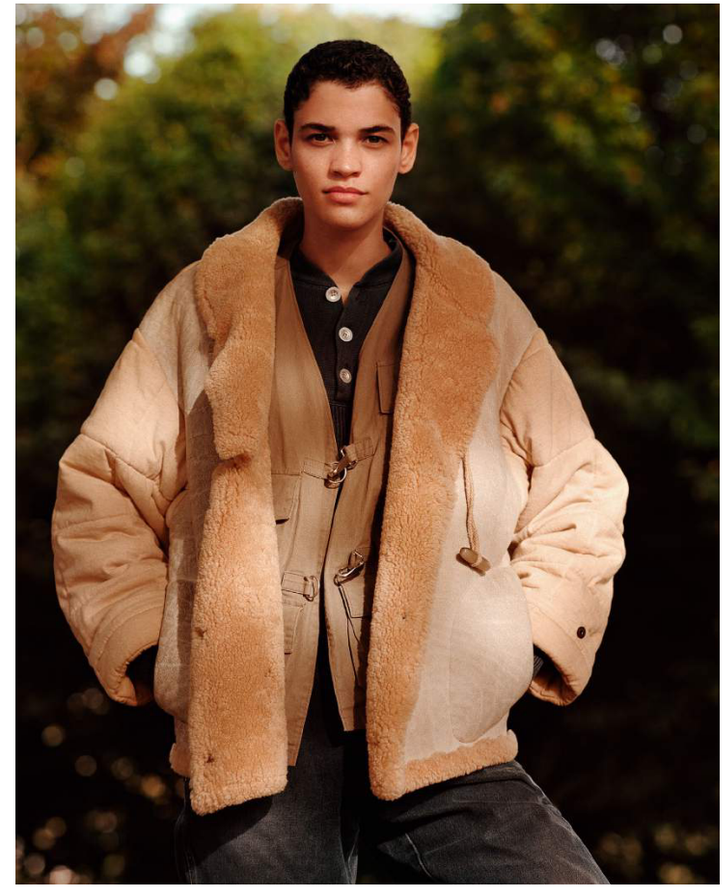


Left:
Wool boat-neck ribbed sweater (Autumn/Winter 1983)
and stonewash jeans (Spring/Summer 1989), both Bratsk Archive

Above:
Tela Stella reversible print trench coat (Autumn/Winter 1982)
and Tela Stella back-to-front trousers (Spring/Summer 1982), both Tela Fell Archive

Above:
Rex nylon imitation flying helmet (Autumn/Winter 1986), Tela Stella jacket with reflective detailing (Spring/Summer 1983), and Tela Stella trousers (Spring/Summer 1983), all Bratsk Archive

Right:
Tela Stella duster coat (Spring/Summer 1982), Tela Fell Archive



Left:
Marina cotton-hemp Rep pigment-print jacket, cotton-hemp Rep pigment-print chore trousers (both Spring/Summer 1986),
and pebble-grey compass logo T-shirt (Spring/Summer 1990), all Bratsk Archive

Above:
Sheepskin and padded-jersey toggled liner (Autumn/Winter 1986),
Tela Stella vest (Spring/Summer 1994), ribbed sweater (Autumn/Winter 1982),
and drill chore trousers (Spring/Summer 1988), all Bratsk Archive

Above:
Heavy ribbed-jersey sweater (Spring/Summer 1984)
and jumbo-cord trousers (Spring/Summer 1988), both Tela Fell Archive

Right:
Tenth anniversary Tela Stella Zeltbahn cape (Spring/Summer 1992) from Tela Fella Archive.
Socks, Falke. Shoes, vintage Polo Ralph Lauren from Carlo Manzi

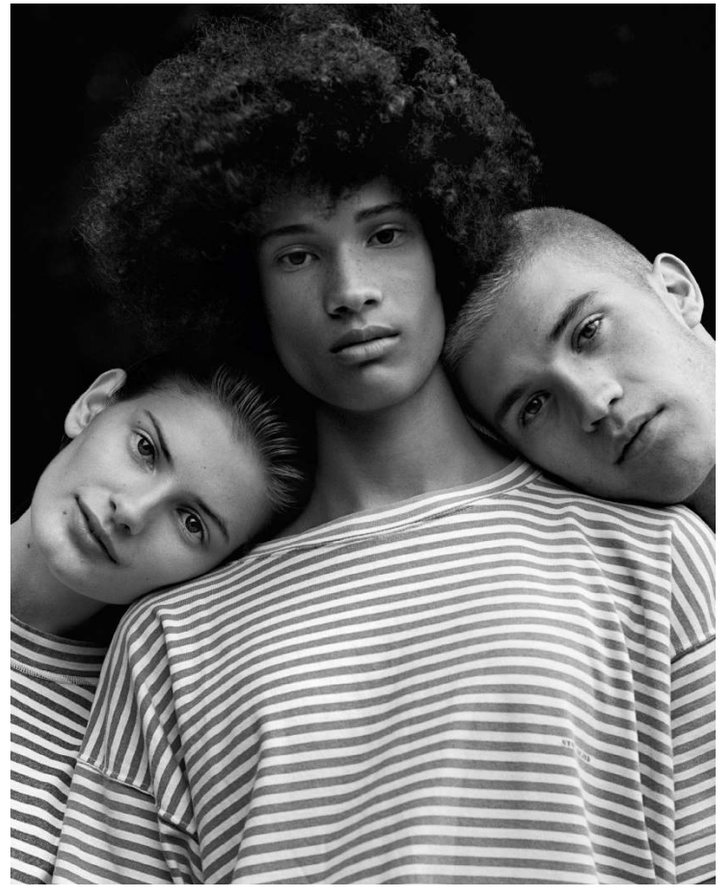
Left:
Rex nylon imitation flying helmet (Autumn/Winter 1986), Jock County cotton and fur-trim jacket (Autumn/Winter 1985), rubber-plaque heavy-cotton T-shirt (Spring/Summer 1989), cotton-hemp Rep pigment-print chore trousers (Spring/Summer 1986), and Marina work boots (Autumn/Winter 1985), all Bratsk Archive

Above:
Ice trench coat (Autumn/Winter 1988) and Ice Camo pleated shorts (Spring/Summer 1990), both Tela Fell Archive

Above:
Ice jacket (Autumn/Winter 1987), Marina double-pocket shirt (Autumn/Winter 1992),
and jeans (Spring/Summer 1987), all Tela Fell Archive

Right:
Wolf-fur lined nylon parka (Autumn/Winter 1994), Tela Fell Archive

Hair stylists: Gary Gill, Matt Mulhall, Shon. Make-up artist: Lynsey Alexander. Manicurist: Pebbles Aikens.
Photography assistants: Simon Mackinlay, Lex Kembery. Styling assistants: Clemence Rose, Hannah Ryan, Hugo Santos, Emma Simmonds.



Left:
Glazed-silk 'toffee-wrapper' light jacket (Autumn/Winter 1992)
and fleece neck-zipped sweater (Autumn/Winter 1993), both Bratsk Archive

Above:
Jersey pigment-print T-shirt (Spring/Summer 1992), Bratsk Archive

Every original's real achievement is timelessness. To survive the test of time and to earn the right to go beyond the minutiae of the here and now require focus, a radical belief in one's own vision strong enough to resist passing trends and fads, and avoid selling out. Only history can tell what will survive, of course, and even history sometimes succumbs to the ephemeral, yet originals are both rare and easy to spot. Massimo Osti is one, a designer who earned his right to join the pantheon alongside Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo and Giorgio Armani. 'Osti had an eclectic eye, finding inspiration in military uniforms, workwear and sportswear, all of which are staple design influences nowadays, but were far less so then,' says veteran stylist Simon Foxton, who has been working with Stone Island for over a decade (but never with Osti himself). 'His genius was then to take those ideas and remould them into something totally new and modern in look and feel. This was the DNA of the company he created and his legacy still holds true today.'

Massimo Osti devoted his entire output to men's sportswear, and he courted neither the flashy and wealthy, nor the creative and crazy, but ordinary customers living in cities. 'I think football fans and fanatics took up Stone Island so enthusiastically for a number of reasons,' says Foxton. 'It feels and looks expensive – which it is – so it is a status symbol, but not in a flashy here-today-gone-tomorrow way. It is more like a well-designed car or motorcycle. It assiduously avoids being seen as a "fashion" label.' Osti did not even consider himself a fashion designer – and coming from a graphic design and communications background, he was not. He did not do high fashion but the clothing he invented at his labels Stone Island and CP Company – bold and futuristic at the former, soft and welcoming at the latter – have lost none of their power in the three or four decades since their launch. 'I would definitely put him in the same league as Helmut Lang,' says stylist Max Pearmain, who is a long-time fan of Osti's work. 'He was a game changer.'

Massimo Osti devoted his entire output to men's sportswear, courting neither the flashy and wealthy, nor the creative and crazy, but ordinary customers.

Massimo Osti died, aged just 60, in 2005, a time when his star had probably begun to wane. Back in the early 1980s, with business booming, Osti had sold a majority stake in Stone Island and CP to Carlo Rivetti, the owner of Sportswear Company. By the mid-1990s, he was finding being both a designer and an entrepreneur gruelling, so he walked away from it all. He launched a number of ventures, some successful (Left Hand), some less so (Massimo Osti Production), but all short-lived and marked by his reuse of previously used shapes and fabrics. Throughout his professional life, despite introducing groundbreaking innovations in techniques such as garment dyeing or wool brushing, despite using daring heat-sensitive and highly reflective fabrics, despite turning the humble down jacket into a urban staple when most people were still only using it for skiing, and despite almost immediately gaining a cult following – even if the object of the cult was the product, not its designer – Massimo Osti was never considered as one of the Italian megastars, such as Valentino, Gianni Versace or Gianfranco Ferré. It was perhaps because he was always pigeonholed by the press. Osti did not really care, however; he liked playing his own game too much, took too much pleasure in skewering the auteur rhetoric that was integral to the meteoric rise of the 'Made in Italy' movement. He was always too busy working on some fabric treatment, collaging bits and pieces into wholly new shapes, to really care about flaunting his own lifestyle for promotional reasons or pontificating about fashion with a capital F and hogging the limelight. His passions were adventurous and intensely physical. He loved sailing, for instance – it was not by chance that he chose a compass rose as the Stone Island logo – but his passions were also private. He wasn't interested in creating status symbols that helped other people do the same. There was a distinctively Bolognese laissez-faire to such a benevolent disdain for the demands of fame. Particularly as it was the 1980s, when fame was a social must, and swimming against the current required nerves and guts.

Massimo Osti's oeuvre remains so relevant today that it almost needs to be written about in the present tense to be properly dissected. (The images that accompany this story, styled by Pearmain and photographed by Alasdair McLellan, are proof of such unadulterated nowness.) His work intertwines inventively functional shapes, painterly colours, and engaging textures because Osti approached garment-making as a three-dimensional endeavour: it was about form not just image. Working intensively with fabric treatments like dyes and stonewashes, he mastered the art of giving clothes an intensely worn, but not destroyed patina. Even at their brightest, Stone Island or CP Company garments – outerwear, mostly – never looked brand new, stiff, glaring or garish; not even the reflective pieces came across as cold and industrial. Instead, they all proudly wore a touch of history on their surfaces, like they already had adventures to tell. This pre-life embedded in the fabric might partly explain their timelessness. Take the wonderful Tela Stella, a stonewashed canvas based upon truck tarpaulins and impregnated with resins and aged with enzyme washes, which was the material of choice for the first three Stone Island collections. Pearmain calls it 'so raw and straightforward that it has an Arte Povera glow'; it proved so popular that supplies were actually rationed.

Timelessness is also a matter of shapes, and signature Massimo Osti garments do often look like rethought archetypes. He reinvented the once-codified iconography of parkas, field jackets, riding coats and blousons, which he constantly spliced, dissected, reassembled – but never distorted. As a result, an Osti design feels both familiar and alien in equal measure, with his clever use of copywriting adding the final coating of progressive pragmatism. (Both fabric and styles were given simple, but memorable Italian names that hinted at Osti's background in communications.) While there was a free-wheeling inventiveness to his work, it never came at the detriment of function, which Massimo Osti considered essential; every little detail had a reason, from a dart placed mysteriously on an elbow or a ridiculous number of pockets. His garments, as a result, embodied a reassuring brand of straightforwardness – they felt like design objects, not silly fashion pieces.

It is more like a well-designed car or motorcycle. Osti didn't even consider himself a fashion designer. And coming from graphic design, he was not.

Such originality was the result of Osti's unique way of working. An avid collector of vintage militaria, he built an extensive archive that functioned as the primary source material for everything he did. When working on a piece, he rummaged throughout his archive, pillaging anything that took his fancy – a sleeve here, a pocket there – and collaged it back together into something new. He photocopied every detail of the originals, before stapling and gluing together a life-sized model that allowed him to keep everything under control. Fabric research was carried out in parallel, the Osti signature being an exacting seamless merging of shape and texture. The results were always smashing. In 1983, a Zoltan capetent originally made for the German Army was reworked into Zeltbahn, a Stone Island gem, all askew buttoning and flowing volume, with bright Tela Stella adding a bold twist; in 1988, Japanese gas masks inspired the goggle lenses incorporated into the hood of the CP Company Millemiglia jacket, an immediate hit.

To show you how much Massimo Osti could strike a chord, let us return to 1980s Sicily. I was in high school when that Millemiglia jacket came out – and it was a sensation. The goggles on the hood felt almost like *Blade Runner*; it was all performance-art Mutoid Waste Company, yet the jacket's tobacco-brown fabric's lived-in patina made it look easy to wear. The only minus was the hefty price tag, of course. Indeed, the local boutique in my hometown of Ragusa carried just the one piece. Luckily, it was my size. I begged my mother to buy it for me. Knowing full well of my sudden about-turns with items of clothing, particularly those I most pestered her about, she told me to wait. Trying to act mature, I accepted. When I rushed back to the shop the following Saturday, though, I had a shock: the jacket had been sold. I was in pieces, and I felt even worse when, from the shop window, I saw the man who had bought it, a young architect, passing on the street. I was so disappointed that I refused to buy a Millemiglia the following season, when it became a carry-over item.

My love affair with Osti, however, goes far deeper than that single episode. I used to actively look for his designs and my memories are full both of pieces I did purchase – the field jackets, the incredibly supple garment-dyed shirts, and the ruby-red Shetland wool CP Company cardigan that I bought in 1992 as a freshman at university and still wear today – as well as pieces I never managed to get my hands on. Like the celebrated Stone Island Ice Jacket, which changed colour according to the wearer's body temperature. A remarkable item, I wanted one so very badly, and in hindsight, I should have bought what became an instant collector's item. Back in the day, though, the idea of a parka that would react to my body heat – changing colour with my emotional reactions – made me freak out. Reader, I did not buy it.

The images in this story, just like my vivid memories, are filled with Stone Island archive pieces that do not smell or spell past, but talk of the now. (Indeed, some are still being worn.) They demand no nostalgia from me – first and

foremost because Massimo Osti hated that sentiment. Who could blame him? Nostalgia, if interpreted merely as regret for a better past, is a paralysing feeling: an invitation to linger and whisper, to look back in angst and despair, safe in the knowledge that today is worse than yesterday. Massimo Osti was having none of that; he was always looking ahead, taking the best from the past, but making it defiantly of the now. That very Italian way of looking forward not only feels urgent and useful today, but also like a way for fashion to escape the quicksand of dry, soulless marketing, the fundamental dishonesty of relentless product-making that is the devilish cover up for a widespread lack of ideas in this saddening historic moment.

Massimo Osti was a man of ideas, full of concepts that mattered, not layers of varnish over nothing – and he worked hard, if playfully, to make them happen. The tags on his items always stated it clearly: 'Ideas from Massimo Osti.' There's a lesson there, in that enthusiasm for ideas. There's an honesty, too, a value that should be never be taken for granted or underestimated. Massimo Osti was not a marketeer; he was a builder. His aim was not personal stardom or influence, but something as simple as making his clients' lives easier. By working like an industrial designer and by putting the consumer first, Osti imbued his work with a truthfulness that today has been completely erased by the idea that astute storytelling can help selling nothingness as genius. This stress on the product came from his non-professional background. For writer Alberto Abruzzese, Osti was a 'producer' who followed each product from its design inception to production to the advertising campaigns, which often featured clothing industrially photographed as still lifes. Osti managed the balance of material and immaterial, of product-making and communication with acumen, smartness and a coherence that came from his Italian outlook.

In our ever-connected globalized world, national identities might appear irrelevant to fashion, but a local spirit is an essential ally in the war on the generic. To me, Massimo Osti is the quintessential Italian creative: one driven by a no-holds-barred hunger, a brutally pragmatic hands-on approach and a positive, nothing-is-impossible outlook on things. As an Italian, I see Osti's take on creativity and entrepreneurship as fitting perfectly into the enthusiastically industrious Emilia region of central Italy, and in particular in the city of Bologna, where he was born and bred.

His studio was on the central Via Zanardi, the same street as the main faculties of the local university, whose history harks back to the Middle Ages. For non-Italians it can be hard to understand how Italian identity is a composite, excitedly fragmented affair, not monolithic. For centuries, after the fall of the Roman Empire, we have been a land of little commons and little feuds, and we have always nurtured our *genius loci* with immense pride, trying to be as different as possible from our neighbours just a few kilometres away. Massimo Osti was an original, but originality does not happen in a void; Bologna is integral to his story – it could have never happened in the same way anywhere else.

Bologna in the 1970s and early 1980s was a particular, anomalous, free creative zone: a place bursting with incendiary energy in every field, from music to theatre to art. Ideologically speaking, it was just as peculiar, sitting at the crossroad of leftist rebellion, irony, absurdism, and an unprecedented stress on the multidisciplinary. It comes as no surprise that the first academic 'interfaculty' dedicated to arts, music and performing arts – named DAMS and with Umberto Eco on the staff – opened in Bologna, attracting renegades from all over the country. It all coalesced in the Movement of 1977, a politically countercultural moment that was dreamily ironic rather than gritty, with great music, great writers and great fanzines. While not active role in the rebellion, Osti was part of the milieu, breathing in the atmosphere, and anonymously supporting *Frigidaire*, an incendiary publication that mixed comic strips, literature, art and porn in equal doses, and remains influential today. Osti was just as free in his professional approach and his openness. He started in fashion by bringing his graphic-design sensibility to a series of screen-printed T-shirts that were different from anything else at the time. That spark, that ability to talk to the public and create a reaction, stayed with him all along his career.

'A cult inspires the notion that the thing you worship is singular,' says the stylist Max Pearmain, 'and to my eye Osti is one of a kind.'

Which brings us to the final and central topic: the cult. Massimo Osti let his work speak for itself, an approach that attracted followers immediately. For Stone Island, among the first were the Paninari, perhaps the only indigenous Italian subculture. Paninari had a wide demographic, going from the square to the quasi-edgy, and while the average Paninaro was happy with a Moncler puffer, the movement's cognoscenti were quickly worshipping at the altar of the experimental, expensive and elusive Stone Island. (The more painterly CP Company and CP Collection became the uniforms of choice for the artistic and creative communities.) Stone Island evolved into an enduring cult, one still alive today in particular in Britain, thanks to its popularity with football fans. 'The cult was definitely brought back to Britain by supporters who came in contact with the Paninari in Italy,' says McLellan. 'Owning and flaunting Stone Island made you royalty back in the day.' New Stone Island continues to be produced and bought, but true obsessives collect vintage Osti designs, such as the items featured in this story.

Buying an Osti piece is probably a good investment. Stone Island has never been silly or predictably fashionable, and the boldness it oozes is palpable. That makes followers fervent and eager for more. On top of which, it is extremely functional. 'A cult inspires the notion that the thing you worship is singular,' says Max Pearmain, 'and to my eye Osti is one of a kind.' Such cultish Massimo Osti dedication somehow closes the circle in a proactive way. The enduring relevance of this master of form and function lies in his unique ability to communicate, not through advertising or press releases, but rather through the clothes themselves. Straightforwardness equalled inventiveness for him. A purveyor of visionary pragmatism, Massimo Osti changed fashion at its core, forever. In fact, you might well be wearing something he invented a long time ago, even though he didn't actually design it – and that is a genuine achievement.

‘The personal and the undeniable.’

For Francesco Risso, Marni is a platform to explore the outer limits of consciousness.

Francesco Risso/Andy Massaccesi

By Tim Blanks
Photographs by Ethan James Green
Styling by Tom Guinness

Wool turtleneck, Autumn/Winter 2018.

Patchwork silk dress, Spring/Summer 2018.

Techno cotton robe, Spring/Summer 2019.

Men's striped jacket, Spring/Summer 2018.
Dress with pearls and golden metal necklace, Spring/Summer 2019.

PVC coat with sartorial details and stretch-knit turtleneck, Autumn/Winter 2018.

Satin skirt and leather boots, Autumn/Winter 2017.

Patchwork silk dress, Spring/Summer 2018.

Draped silk and cotton dress, Spring/Summer 2019.

Embroidered cotton dress, Spring/Summer 2019.

Mohair sweaters, Autumn/Winter 2019.

Embroidered cotton dress, Spring/Summer 2019.
Mohair sweaters, Autumn/Winter 2019.

Draped silk and cotton dress, Spring/Summer 2019.

From left: Striped jacket, Spring/Summer 2018. Satin dress, Autumn/Winter 2017.
Jersey large striped sweater and jacket, Spring/Summer 2019. Striped jacket, Spring/Summer 2018.

From top left: Flip flops, Spring/Summer 2020. Striped sweater and cotton shirt, Autumn/Winter 2018;
patchwork dress, Spring/Summer 2018; leather sandals, Autumn/Winter 2019.
Flip flops, Spring/Summer 2020; down coat, Autumn/Winter 2017.

Knitted polo shirt, Spring/Summer 2020.
Knitted top and patchwork silk dress, Spring/Summer 2018.

Knitted polo shirt, Spring/Summer 2019.
Striped hat and jacket in techno cotton, Spring/Summer 2019.
Satin dress, Autumn/Winter 2017.

Silk shirt and skirt, Spring/Summer 2019. Bomber jacket, Spring/Summer 2018.
Melt down sneakers, Spring/Summer 2020. Leather sandals, Autumn/Winter 2017.

Leather coat, Autumn/Winter 2017.
Silk shirt and skirt, Spring/Summer 2019.
Bomber jacket, Spring/Summer 2018.

Knitted polo shirt and top, Spring/Summer 2018.
Cotton shirt, Autumn/Winter 2019.
Silk tie, Autumn/Winter 2018.

Francesco Risso was born on the deck of a boat during a winter storm at sea, and raised in the bosom of an extended, eccentric family of tailors and aesthetes in Genoa. He was not destined for ordinariness, and his stewardship of the Italian label Marni, itself a repository of the unpredictable and the arcane in its 25-year existence, has provided Risso with a platform to explore the outer limits of his consciousness *and* his creativity. It made perfect sense that I found him in the middle of the Balinese jungle, where he was on a silent qigong retreat for two weeks. I hated to break the silence with a phone call, but *System*'s needs must. He reassured me: 'I am out of my silence – I'm ready to talk.'

Tim Blanks: Is qigong a particularly esoteric discipline?

Francesco Risso: It comes from Chinese medicine and was born out of Taoism and the moment when people were actually trying to go a bit against the government, years and years ago, and then it became a sort of practice. I just discovered that it is used a lot as therapies in the hospitals in China. It's very much about how the body and mind are related, and it is quite amazing. I have been here for 12 days in the jungle and I haven't seen anything of Bali at all. I am just surrounded by nature and it is really beautiful.

That's a curious coincidence. That is really where the last collection was: an interplay between flesh and spirit in the jungle.
You know that between the men's collection in June and the women's collection, I started to work with the Miao community in southern China? I kind of had this lateral experience with them and it was very, very illuminating. Somehow, it made me wonder a lot about time, and taking more of it. You know when designers used to go on long holidays and come back radiant and inspired? Through that experience with the Miao, I started asking myself all these questions and that is why I am here.

This sounds like a personal quest.
Actually, it is more about finding other ways to gather inspiration. I have always been quite obsessive about my fashion and literature and movies, almost as if I've been driving the collections through my familiarity with certain literary phenomena , while also building up the stories and personalities through that process. I never believed I could stop thinking like, I don't know, Saint Laurent going to Marrakech for a month and then coming back with this amazing collection. But the Miao project was like experiencing and learning other types of processes and coming up with something else.

It's easy to see this as a search for enlightenment. You've never used fashion terminology to talk about your work. You seem as interested in expanding your mind as you are in expanding your métier – and you push the limits of your métier by pushing the limits of your mind. Like when you talked about *psychedelissima* at the last show. I think you are touching on something unusual in fashion because with *psychedelissima*, you can have a very good trip but, obviously, you can also have a very bad one.
Absolutely.

Same thing with the notion of child's play in your work. Children are innocent, but they can also be cruel. There's always that dichotomy in what you do.
There are a lot of truths in children, in how they relate to the world. It is quite spontaneous. I guess I am quite into spontaneity of thought.

Do you have to work at that or does it just come naturally?
It's more like a process of evolution. One idea gathers the other and so on, inspiration after inspiration. There is a path between the ideas. But many times, it comes from other people. The last collection, the *Psychedelissima* collection, came from the people that I met in Brazil, and my interaction with them. Usually I dive a lot into books or movies, but movies are becoming a bit exclusive. It's almost like you think of people watching a movie at home rather than sharing an experience. So, lately I have been diving more into music. Particularly, the Tropicália movement in Brazil, a mix of artists who were passionate and full of so much love and creativity, as well as so motivated by politics.

You could see the people you spent time with in Brazil have been struggling for years against regimes that represent the death of nature, creativity and the imagination. I think it was Lawrence [Steele, Risso's partner in life and at Marni] who brought up the idea of 'beauty as protest' after your show. That idea kind of worked its way through the whole season. But obviously you need some force behind it.
There are many versions of beauty. I see beauty when I see somebody turn their head in a particular way; that is my personal interpretation of beauty. It is very subjective. But there is also absolute beauty in nature and beauty in the body — that is undeniable. So it's about playing between the two: the personal and the undeniable. I love that.

You had a past connection with Alexander McQueen and the dichotomy that fuelled him was beauty and horror; yours is innocence and corruption. In your last show notes, you mentioned 'the fine line between beautiful vertigo and what the fuck is happening'.
It's not even something that you can define so much, but a few days ago, I was thinking that I like to destroy things and to rip them apart. That made me dig deep, and I thought, 'What is this? Am I a destructive person?' So when I dig into it, there is something about detaching from the things you are creating, detaching from the creative act itself, where you are not just this thing you have learned, you can go beyond it to find the pure essence of it. It's almost like you play with those beauty references, but then you have to destroy them so you can see the essence better. It is a part of my daily processes, a bit like a mantra. Even when I wake up and I have to put on some clothes, I never like the way they are and sometimes I rip them off. It's not just taking away, it's *detaching*. Am I explaining it well?

You are. You get the violence. For me what you do is like Dada much of the time. The only way you get people to look at things differently is by destroying the things they are looking at. How important is the dark side to you?
It's as important as the light side, I guess. There's a lot of romanticism in the dark side. When I was young, I was obsessed by horror movies and really dark shit; people were a bit concerned. But actually, I was very fascinated by the extreme romanticism, that extreme love and beauty that somehow turns into a tragedy. I was not into torture porn or anything like that – I was passionate about *Nosferatu*, *Dracula*, the Gothicism behind those dark stories.

You call yourself @asliceofbambi on Instagram. *Bambi* is a horror movie for little kids.
Oh, totally. But such a beauty as well.

Yes, it's like whenever human beings try to work nature out, they always get drawn into its rawness. That is what I feel in your work, in the Matisse jungle of the last collection and the one that came after you saw the Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud paintings in the *All Too Human* exhibition at the Tate in London. The way you used colour in that collection, putting it on by hand so that the paint was almost like flesh, that was so incredibly primal.
That was a beautiful process for that collection, and I really treasured those moments, working with the team and everyone in the studio. At a certain point we all sat down and said, 'We have to make this with our hands.' All those gestures of pulling up the fabric and moulding it onto the body and also making it quite spontaneous and not too finished. It was underlining the process of the studio and exalting each hand somehow.

That's very against the whole mechanical aspect of fashion. We have entered an era where fashion is like a machine, but there is a spirit of defiance in what you do, even in the way you talk about your collections, very deliberately in quite abstract or surreal terms. Are you deliberately defiant of the orthodox way of doing things?
There is something interesting in diving into processes that can possibly lead how you make things, as well as resonate in the pieces that you find in stores. For instance, there was nothing haute couture in that collection. It was more about how to drape with your hands to make these pleats and how to stitch them quickly and how to exalt that gesture. Everything was coded, so that it could be shown in that way, but also go into the shops and not just be like falling-apart pieces of clothing. I'm fascinated by exploring the mechanical *and* unmechanical processes of what we do. It is something that I found so interesting with the Miao people, because it is totally against the core of fast fashion and the speed of our world. It is really like diving into I-don't-know-how-many-years ago and I find it a fascinating challenge to somehow preserve those values rather than speed. I am a son of speed, but it's so beautiful to find a different reality to preserve as well.

'When I was young, I was obsessed by horror movies and really dark shit. I was fascinated by extreme romanticism that can somehow turn into tragedy.'

'When I wake up and have to put clothes on, I never like the way they are and sometimes I rip them off. It's not just taking away, it's *detaching*.'

Do you think it is possible?
Totally, absolutely. I mean with the trends and the power and money that goes around in fashion nowadays, why not? It would be crazy if we weren't aware of those things. I mean, are we just becoming monsters digesting everything like obsessed vacuum cleaners? I don't think so. Most people I know understand time and speed, but also appreciate the value of things and the objects they can treasure in their wardrobes. It's all possible in that sense.

Instead of 'why?', you ask 'why not?' — and to me that is the critical question in fashion. Rei Kawakubo asks it a lot. It's interesting because the sense of human possibility is becoming more and more acute as the sense of automated possibilities gets stronger with AI and so on.
I'm not sure. Maybe it's not. I want to reach them; I don't pretend they want to reach me. I'm so fucking curious. If you are outside looking in, they are so inspiring. You look at the young people in the streets protesting and they are so cool, so individual, so beautiful.

What is so powerful is the sense that they have nothing to lose because they have everything to lose. You say that maybe what you do can't be relevant to them, but what you do, more than most people in the industry, is work to create something communal, something handmade. Everything about that last show, from the clothes and the set to the models with the mud in their hair, felt like a ritual, a pagan celebration.
It is funny because the beautiful side of that ritual is that it was multiple hands merging in one process, in that show, in those clothes. It was all the people that I work with, a dance of multiple hands circulating around one idea.

Being born on a boat during a storm, in air and water, made you some kind of fabulous fairy child. Did you feel special or different when you were young?
No. I grew up in a family with many brothers and sisters and, like any family I know, my siblings were good at making me feel not special. I was the last one, so they were like, 'Oh, he is the luckiest.' I grew up with this judgemental vibe and was silent until I was 16 when I was like, 'Bye, I'm off to have my own experience!' Maybe that is where being born on a boat came back to me, because I was able to leave. But no, I don't relate my childhood to feeling special.

How could your quest to find the relevance in irrelevance apply to fashion?
It's a really interesting question. I had a look around fashion this season and more than ever it felt like everything was the opposite of everything else. What is relevant? What is irrelevant? Do you know?

'Are we becoming monsters digesting everything like vacuum cleaners? I don't think so. Most people appreciate the value of things they can treasure.'

It's all a bit scary, but I believe there is a renewed, *positive* emphasis on what humans are capable of.
Look at these young children marching on the streets; it gives me goosebumps. My God, it is so inspiring. Maybe we're on the edge of extinction, but on the other hand, there is this incredible force of young people. It's probably never happened before that we know. And now we have these incredible minds out on the street doing incredible things. They care about the environment, they are really pushing. And this is the 'why not?' There is the testimony of something happening out there that is the opposite of just straight consumption.

How do you make your world relevant to them?

We were talking about beauty and horror, but that is the world we live in: the hand creates and the hand destroys. It becomes this perfect metaphor for humanity. There is a huge amount of philosophy in what you do. Do you believe in destiny?
I do. There is destiny and synchronizing, I guess. Thank God I don't remember being born on a boat on a cold day in December. I do remember moments afterwards with my dad and adventurous times when I was surrounded by characters. I think that experience sets a certain DNA that synchronizes with the other experiences in my life.

Relevance to me has everything to do with engagement, urgency, accountability, compassion.
For me, it's connections. When everything in the world seems designed to divide us, anything that brings us back together is powerful. This is what Greta Thunberg and these young kids are doing now.

Looking at all that is going on in your work makes me wonder if fashion is enough for you to communicate everything you have inside you…
Maybe not. But really, is fashion enough for anybody at the moment?

Models: Dara Allen, Marcus Cuffie, Cruz Valdez, Fernando Cerezo, Stevie Triano, Peter Goldberg, Marcs Goldberg, Devan Diaz, Miles Raymer, Iris Diane Palma, Nico Negron, Martine Gutierrez
Special thanks for Francesco Risso's self-portrait: Andy Massaccesi

Wool bouclé coat and checked wool coat, Autumn/Winter 2019.
Silk printed shirt and rainbow leather shirt, Spring/Summer 2020.
Double face checked coat and patchwork mohair sweater, Autumn/Winter 2019.
Mohair sweaters, down coat, striped mohair cardigan, striped velour hoodie, leather coat, and striped mohair sweaters, all Autumn/Winter 2019.

'I own objects that have a life of their own .'
10 artefacts from Francesco Risso's collection

Patchworked, hand-embroidered canvas shoe

I've spent years of holidays by the sea with Lawrence [Steele], Fabio [Zambernardi] and friends of ours who are artists and musicians, and we often find ourselves all making something together, like necklaces. These hideous objects become memories of moments we've created and brought to life together, and I am very attached to memories. This shoe is like that, a sort of meditation game, something I embroidered as a souvenir. It actually became too small for my foot, so I stapled it onto another shoe so that I could still wear it. Unfortunately, the embroidery is not very visible.

Childhood teddy bear

I have a passion for teddy bears, but especially ones that are really old, from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. They're incredible, the textures, the fur, the eyes. Somehow, teddy bears can always be iconic because they are so beautifully made. I love that. It's almost like seeing different versions of Mickey Mouse. This one was given to me when I was born, and it's still here. Plus, it's striped — and I love stripes.

Traditional Neapolitan charm, made of coral

This is something very dear to me that Lawrence gave me four years ago as a present. It's called a *svelarkani*. (You can actually see it written on the box.) A hand holding keys is quite esoteric, I have to say – they are supposed to open the gates of your life. Lawrence gave it to me in a moment of happiness and challenges, so it was a very nice symbolic gift. I love the keys.

Mexican calfskin mask

I got this in Mexico maybe three years ago, when I was in the Yucatan. I think it was made for kids. I was quite surprised, because I hadn't seen anything like it. It made me think of *Lord of the Flies*. The painting is quite spontaneous, and somehow it looked like a teddy bear. It's not a bear, though; I think it must be a raccoon.

Kachina dolls, from Native American Hopi communities

I got obsessed with these after a trip to Los Angeles, where I visited the house of Charles and Ray Eames. They collected a lot of interesting objects, like Kachina dolls. I really like artefacts like this. I'm fascinated by the sort of instinctive creativity that births such objects in random places. Kachina dolls aren't toys; they're used more for rituals, though I am not sure of the exact significance. I love these ones because they are really old. The ones you find now are not as textured, and the colours are different.

Calfskin necklace, prototype from my first Marni collection

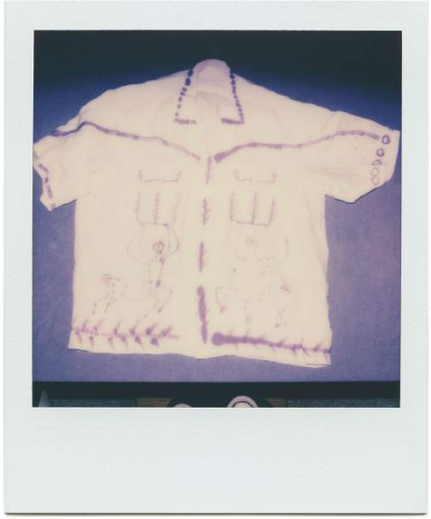
The foundation of this collection was the child at play. There were chain necklaces with teddy-bear eyes, and things that were quite elementary and playful. So this necklace was almost like the fun at the beginning of the work, like a charm for that moment. It was supposed to look like a leopard's tail, inserted into two metal grommets to become a necklace. You could wear your cat's tail as a necklace. It was also the idea of giving new life to something old.

Fur-coat collar belonging to my father, with vintage safety pins and brooches.

I am very attached to this. It goes on every jacket or coat of the moment. That is why there are all those things on it because I need them to attach the collar. I love it because it is like a talisman. I do like to believe in magic, but this is more like a memory to me. I have a lot of these objects, which are objects that have a life of their own. They acquire a personality, and I can get very passionate about them.

Egyptian gold and enamel brooch and 19th-century 'fauna' brooch

I use a lot of pins. Camilla Nickerson gave me this one; it's a little treasure of my relationship with her. The other brooch is quite the horror object, but so beautiful. It is a little hard to see, but it is from the 18th century and it is so Gothic, like a beautiful earring transforming into a spider. It is an interesting object. There is a wonderful jewellery shop in Milan called Pennisi where I find a lot of old things, but when we were robbed, everything I had bought at Pennisi was stolen, apart from these two pieces, which were really well hidden.



Short-sleeved shirt hand-painted by Pablo Picasso

This is a present Fabio gave to me. Picasso made a series of shirts for himself – I think in the 1960s or 1970s – and then they were produced in small numbers. It's not Picasso's size, it's quite big, but it's a really beautiful object. Another object that has a life of its own. And I always come back to this shirt. I've used the patterns on shirts I've painted.

Vintage corduroy shirt

Another treasure that Fabio gave me. It's a very simple shirt but it reminds me of him, all the times we had together and what he taught me. It's really falling apart, almost impossible to wear now. But when I open my wardrobe, it is the first thing I see and it directs my eyes, as if it is ready to be remembered.

‘I want to grow, but without putting on weight!’

After 10 years in business, and still under 30 years of age, Simon Porte Jacquemus takes a moment to reflect on family, fortune, and the future.

By Loïc Prigent
Portrait by Pierre-Ange Carlotti

Back in June, Simon Porte Jacquemus appeared in a lavender field in Provence to take the applause after his 10th-anniversary show, his biggest yet. It marked the end of a decade in which this self-taught designer has built his start-up brand, Jacquemus – the maiden name of this late mother – into a €40-million-a-year business. From the beginning – when instead of fashion school he began his label while working as a sales assistant at Comme des Garçons – to today as a high-growth fashion business with precisely zero bricks-and-mortar stores, Jacquemus has continually followed his instincts. With best-selling, Internet-breaking hats and bags seen on the biggest stars, and easy-to-wear, yet skilfully constructed clothing, the brand has become a unique part of the fashion landscape. Yet after the acclaim for the beauty of that Provençal show – all pink carpet, bright clothes and purple lavender – the designer began to question himself about where he was headed. As his brand turns 10, Jacquemus the designer is approaching 30, and increasingly wondering about the role of fashion today. 'How,' he finds himself asking, 'can we do things better?'

Loïc Prigent: Let's start with Jacquemus, the brand, and the company. You're still independent?
Simon Porte Jacquemus: Yes, 100%, by choice. At the beginning I might have needed help – I was 20 and I didn't know exactly what was going to happen – but my dream was never to be bought out. It was exciting to think that someone might *want* to buy the company, but I never wanted it to actually happen.

Wouldn't it have simplified things to have more financial backing?
I don't think so. I think if it's happening this way, then it's happening in an organic way. Of course, it helps having more money, but what you often see is that it slows down creativity. I'm well aware that there are brands with millions of euros in the bank, but they don't manage to sell their clothes or make a real impression on their clients. It's not a magic spell. It's really good that all that could have happened hasn't happened! It could have finished in a situation where I no longer understood what I was doing and ended up completely disconnected, just doing my clothes on an extraordinary salary. No, I think it's good that I'm still grounded in reality. Even though extraordinary things are happening, I'm still grounded.

You've always been connected with the business side?
Of course! I have advisors who I often see and they have helped me, but that's only once a month. Everything has happened, in terms of the figures, really organically. I work on instinct and it's always led me. My strategic and financial advisor always says, 'Simon, you're the only person who guesses the figures, the exact figures!' I always know exactly how much we are going to turn over the next season, and I never get it wrong. I always say what it's going to be and he's always surprised when I'm right. I can feel it when things are right. I'm the one who is the most exposed to everyone, and I can just feel it, I don't know how.

An internal business barometer?
I don't know. That sounds a bit weird.

If you guess right every time, that's really crazy.
But the situation has been pretty crazy! From the financial point of view, it's quite exceptional, the bankers have always said to me, 'Wow, there have been almost zero loans.' To get where I am in such a Zen manner, is pretty rare. We've gone from €10 million to €20-something million, from €20-something million to €40-something million.

Do these figures give you vertigo? When you get to €40 million?
They're just figures; they don't really mean anything to me now. My work is not about the number of zeroes in figures. I don't give a shit. I'm going to be 30 soon and I've been asking myself lots of questions about life, about lots of things. It's true, it's beautiful that Jacquemus works; it's beautiful that we have a clientele; it's lovely selling more clothes – but we and I can do better than that. That's more my philosophy now: I want to grow without putting on weight! I said that quite recently and that's really what I feel. When you start out, you're in the race and you're thirsty. I was young, I wanted bigger shows, and so on, but now I'm asking myself other questions and in fact, it's healthy that I'm asking them.

What do you mean, 'I can do better than that'?
All the processes from A to Z, I'd like them to be done better. If we could be more committed on a human level, have a certain philosophy in my business. I'm reading *Let My People Go Surfing*, the book by Yvon Chouinard, the founder of Patagonia, who really created something special, and his point of view is really interesting. I'm trying to think out of the box. I don't want to be competitive any more; it's strange. To be perfectly honest, I said to myself recently: 'It's been 10 years, the last show was magnificent, our office building is magnificent, your mother would be very proud of you, bravo, the job's done.' I called my grandmother, I said, 'Are you happy? Have I made you happy?' And she said, 'Yes, we're so proud.' And I said, 'OK, then it's time to move to the next step. I want to be the man who does something good and more than that.' Even if I'm a good boss, I think, I want to do things that make more sense to life today and in the world in which we live. I got back from holidays, and it was pretty instinctive, I said to everyone, 'What shall we do? Are we really going to do fashion in the world as it is?' I'm really asking myself big, fundamental questions about why we're doing this and who it's for, and how. I've changed everything in just a few months. I've got a real battle raging in my company, ranging from small things right up to the big ones. And it's not just a question of ecology – even though ecology is a big part of the changes we're making – it's about good practices and a different philosophy, organizing our time better. Everything that fashion doesn't really let us do. I was happy not to be part of fashion week this season; I've really been asking myself lots of questions.

It's interesting you are asking who you are doing this for. I get the impression that you have always been aware of that.
When I said that, it was really in terms of re-evaluating the idea of overproduction, and creating new trends each season. It's much deeper, yes. We have a philosophy and something to say, but beyond that, what are we doing that's good for this world? It's quite philosophical. I said to myself, 'OK, let's take 25 to 50% less fabric this season and see if that forces me to focus on projects that make sense.' For example, let's recycle fabrics, send them to Lesage to make new fabrics, work with an atelier in Paris that helps people who are struggling. I don't know, have projects that make more sense and have real human values. That is more my ambition for the next 10 years. It's more about that. I don't care about any dreams of grandeur or bigger runway shows any more. I've done my biggest show and it feels fake to be part of this endless race; the idea of 'more, more, more' actually disgusts me now.

Disgusts you?
Yes, it's not healthy.

Did you ever do this for the money?
No. Today I could make more money, but that's the exact opposite of what I'm doing. I'm not sure that that's what would make me happy, so I'm asking myself questions. I feel so free today that whatever I decide to do now, I really have to continue feeling absolutely free, otherwise I won't do it. I've always said I'd prefer to shut up shop than give Jacquemus to someone else. That's not the meaning behind what I do.

Because you did it for your mother?
Yes, I did it for her. It carries my mother's name, so it's worth more than the 10 years of work, more than you can imagine. It's certainly not a question of money. In fact, that's what is hard when I find myself with the big finance people, it's hard because we're not talking the same language.

When you won the LVMH Special Prize in 2015, thanks in part to Karl Lagerfeld and Bernard Arnault, did they give you a mentorship?
Yes, for a year.

And how was that, did you learn anything?
It made me grow up and it really was a help. There weren't many areas where I needed help because my management and communications were already good, and I knew I had to sell one collection to pay for the next. There were certain things that I struggled with, though, and it really helped me to become an adult and to look at things from all sides, particularly sales and the legal aspects. That prize really helped give me a healthy foundation. Though I feel like it was 30 years ago when I talk about it. It is very odd for me. The last two or three years have been so intense that when I think about the past, it feels so different.

Have there been people you admire in fashion from a business point of view?
Of course, I admire Rei Kawakubo for her business, which is quite particular, for her boutiques and the way she sees things. Her idea that anybody can buy

'I arrived at Comme des Garçons at 22, wearing a kilt, and with long Kurt Cobain hair. They all said to themselves, 'What on earth does this one want?''

'I don't care about any dreams of grandeur. It feels fake to be part of this endless race; the idea of 'more, more, more' actually disgusts me now.'

something when they go into a Kawakubo boutique is quite amazing, from Converse sneakers to a couture dress or a suit for a man to wear to the bank. It think it's a genius brand, as a business, as a way of being different; it fascinates me.

You saw Rei Kawakubo's business up close?
Yes, and it reassured me about being radical and thinking that it could work if I wanted to do things differently, that it could be more understood in a way.

What did you do for her?
I was a sales assistant in Paris, and I helped do the window displays. I also did an installation in the showroom because I had an eye, but it wasn't a new position; I was still a sales assistant.

How old were you when you were working for her?
From 22 to 24, I think.

In parallel to Jacquemus then?
Yes, I would design and the day after I would be back selling at the boutique. It was a nightmare, horrible, really hard, but then it taught me to be simple in a way. In the evening, you open fashion week and you get the impression of being the eighth wonder of the world, and then the next day, you go back to work, to serving people, which I loved doing, by the way. I love selling; it's a passion of mine. I would have nightmares before arriving at the boutique. Then after I had left Comme des Garçons, I continued having nightmares where I'd see Adrian calling me, saying, 'Simon, you have to come and help me quick, I'm in the shop and there are so many people.'

[President of Comme des Garçons] Adrian Joffe?
Yes, we saw each other often; we would talk about everything. We were close, but less so recently. Perhaps I've needed him less in a way. It's been natural; it's not a problem. I know I can count on him if I need him; he's always there to listen to me. I think he understood the brand wasn't a joke. Being close to him, he would test me to see if I was committed to my label. Quite often he'd say to me, 'You'd give all this up if a big house came calling…' And I'd say, 'That would be dreadful – not at all!' And he would be like, 'Good!' He wanted to see who I was, because I was young. Just imagine, I arrived at Comme des Garçons at 22, wearing a kilt, with long hair like Kurt Cobain and they said to themselves, 'What does this one want?'

How did you get that job?
By forcing my way in. I needed a job and was contacting all the design studios, but I didn't have a degree or anything, so no one ever answered. But they did get back to me and I met Adrian Joffe, and it went well, but he said I was too much of an artist and he couldn't see me working in a boutique. I called him back and said, 'I don't agree with your answer. Please give me the job. I'm going to get up early every morning to do my collection and I'll be the most motivated of your salespeople.' I was crazy; I did things wholeheartedly.

What exactly do you mean when you say you love selling?
It's exciting. I've always liked the commercial vibe at the market with my grandparents on a Saturday or during the summer holidays, selling things. At Comme des Garçons, it is a particular clientele and it was always challenging to sell. I loved making them think that they didn't want to buy anything, because that was when they bought stuff. With certain actresses, they'd be like, 'Oh, I don't know, Simon', and I would say, 'No, don't buy it, if you're not sure; you do really have to want it because it's such a beautiful piece', and they'd say, 'Stop! But it'll be sold', and I'd say, 'Yes, for sure.' 'OK then, I'll take it!' It was like play-acting.

And still today, you're pretty good at selling? With your social media, everything is very direct, you just put the clothes against a white backdrop. Without…
…any chichi, yes. People like to see the product and I think it works really well when we just put the product like that. I have a clientele that really follows me for my products, I'm not going to deny that, so when I put the products up, it works.

One of the brand's real strengths is its accessories. Did you anticipate becoming a brand known for this? It wasn't immediate. The Chiquito bag took quite a while to appear…
Yes, that's true; it was *La Bomba* collection [in September 2017].

There weren't any bags before that?
No, there were a few, but they were less visible. There was a red ball bag in a net, like a basketball, another one that was bean shaped. There were the shoes with a circle and square, which we still sell.

Those were your first hit accessories?
Yes. Selling bags doesn't strike me as that crazy, though.

It feels like it was a catalyst. When people could see the accessories everywhere, then they realized that the brand was real.
Yes, that and the hats. They were the biggest phenomenon, and got us on the covers of all the *Vogue*s and so on, after the *Santons de Provence* collection – they were a real phenomenon. My summer collections always drive success. Winter we almost stagnate, but summer we double.

The 10th-anniversary show in Valensole was a summer show, too. How do you explain that? Is it geographic?
It's another difference, from what I hear. Most other designers are much more at ease with winter. It's easier, it's more covered, so the pieces can be more complicated. There's less skin. But I think what people like about me is a certain sensuality. That is what triggered it. When the Jacquemus woman really became a woman and sensual, it ticked a few boxes in fashion that were missing. Something light, something sensual, without being vulgar.

It was like you just relaxed with that change. Because the earlier shows had had more deconstructive effects; they'd been more cerebral and felt almost Comme des Garçons-esque.
Of course, you can really see the influence of Comme des Garçons in my work. Comme des Garçons was like my school; I've always said it. I learned so much, not only the philosophy, but also the garments. I spent my days trying on clothes and looking at where the sleeve came out of the back, where the stitches were. It really was my school; I make no bones about that – there was a very real influence from Comme des Garçons on my work. In the shirts, in the way I cut clothes, you can see also some Margiela in that sort of conceptualism, but there is a lot of Comme.

The *Santons de Provence* collection [Spring/Summer 2017] was simpler. Is that because you didn't have time to finish it as you wanted?
No, no. There was a collection just before that called *La Reconstruction* that I don't really remember. It was like bits of clothing; I think I wasn't sure who I wanted to be at that moment. It was like there was a bomb in a bin full of clothes and that was what came out; everything was broken up and all weird.

Did you want to annoy the people who were there?
I don't know what it was. There was just something happening in fashion then, and I wanted to do my own bit of chaos. It was maybe a bit dangerous, but I had so much fun.

But you alienated people with that show. That was a risk.
I didn't get that impression; it was what it was. Then the following summer I really wanted to go back to who I was, what I liked; I wanted to do something that was 100% me, very pure. So I said to myself, I'm going to make *santon* toy figures like my grandmothers', like the ones in nativity scenes from my childhood. The project was a bit odd, frankly. On the boards, it really didn't look like much. You had all these *santon* figures from the nativity scene and they didn't make you want them. It was a bet. Who'd have thought Rihanna and all the others would have worn those hats? We didn't think about that at the time.

At first glance, it was a bad idea?
It was a typically French bad idea. I should have done something feminine and modern. It was pretty major at the beginning because I was completely single-minded about the *Santons*. I looked at the images yesterday of the first fittings and they were superb. It was weird, very dramatic. It's still my favourite collection.

The *Santons* marked the end of the conceptual period?
Not an end, but the beginning of femininity. The beginning of something elegant, the collection that came after was quite dark, then came *La Bomba*, and yes, I think I was liberated then. I gave myself the chance to be the woman I have inside me, who is from the south, who can appear a bit 'slutty', not 'slutty', that's not the word, but can seem a bit *too* sensual.

That sensual woman was already there in the *Parapluies de Marseille* and *La Piscine*?
Yes, but it was the sensuality of a young

'I'm well aware that there are brands with millions of euros in the bank, but they don't make a real impression on their clients. It's not a magic spell.'

'I have taken all Jacquemus deliveries in-house. Everything is sent from barns belonging to my grandparents and run by a large part of my family.'

woman who wears her father's big T-shirts, very beautiful, but with something naive about her. She was really Éric Rohmer.

She'd French kiss, but not sleep with you.
Yes, that's it, she was still 17.

But then with *La Bomba*, she'd definitely have sex.
Oh yes, she was on fire!

Did you have this very precise idea of constructing the brand in your mind, or was it through conversations with other people in your team?
I have tried to create quite strong images of Jacquemus from the beginning, with cars, furniture, and films. My inspirations for what I want to put out there in fashion have always been there, right from the beginning. In fact, there were aesthetic shocks, like Godard and the credits of *Le Mépris*, which really marked me and gave me the desire to create my own world. If you look at the foundations of what I love, everything is linked still today. It all makes sense because it's always me who is deciding, 100%. It's me who says I want pink carpet when everyone else is saying you shouldn't put pink carpet in Valensole. It was me who found the field because I wanted it to be 360 degrees when people were seated. I am still 100% 'there', and when I say 'there', sometimes it's too much. It's my own obsession, and always has been. I deal with it just fine. That's why when I see the really important editors in chief at my shows, everything is fluid because they know it's me from A to Z, and I think that's the strength of my projects.

I get the impression there have been moments when you've hesitated, like launching menswear. Even though now, the third collection, it's clear where you're going, to begin with, there was a hesitation.
It was very hard for me, because I was in a very comfortable place with the womenswear, and I wanted to listen to myself. I wanted to do the man I had in mind 100%. I didn't take a designer from whatever studio to help me do the menswear; I really wanted to do menswear how I felt it. It's true, it was hard for me at that point.

What blurred your vision? Was it other people's reaction?
In the end, I think I was focused on certain reactions and other people put me off. In fact, it became the best-selling collection since the start of the Jacquemus story; 95% sell-through, which is very rare. It was a huge, huge success. It was simple, but it was what guys wanted. I had my universe and it's still a journey. I'm learning all the time and I make mistakes. I said the day before the show, 'This is my first collection, but there'll be others.'

Can we talk a little about the online boutique? It's run by you, your dad and your best friend?
Yes, that's right. I have done something rare in the fashion world: I have taken deliveries in-house. Everything is sent from barns belonging to my grandparents and run by a large part of my family; there's my aunt, my stepmother, my father, my stepsister, and my best friend who used to work on Jacquemus' images but who moved down south to change her life. That's changed lots of things, because we all know that deliveries are key to sales. It's mathematical, if a shirt stays on the rail for six months, it won't sell. That's how it is. So, taking deliveries in-house has really helped us operationally. It's very fluid. The online shop is a major part of Jacquemus, because it's now the leading retailer of Jacquemus, so it's really important.

Why no bricks-and-mortar shops? The brand is old enough now; younger brands already have lots of boutiques in lots of countries.
If they enjoy losing money, good luck to them. I prefer to make money rather than lose it. Boutiques are a major investment. When I see the turnovers of boutiques, it doesn't set the pulse racing. Having a boutique for the sake of it, no way. I'd prefer to have projects that are released, that are new, and that say something new about our world. A boutique doesn't appeal to me.

'Our world', do you mean the Jacquemus world?
Yes, but not just that. If it's an experience you want to have, why go to a boutique? What more do you get in a boutique? If it's just for buying, I don't know, I'm just not up for it.

And the restaurants, the Oursin and the Café Citron in the new Galeries Lafayette Champs-Élysées, are they like Jacquemus boutiques?
Not really, it's not 100% Jacquemus. I did the art direction of both spaces from A to Z and I had carte blanche, but it's not totally Jacquemus; they are spaces that the Galeries Lafayette asked me to think about within their stores. There were lots of constraints, too. They're not my boutiques, even if they're not far from a dream space for me. I'd love a living room like the one at Oursin!

How many people work in the Jacquemus office today and how big is it?
Seventy people in 1,600 square metres.

What's your favourite room there?
The space where we all eat together.

I was there when you opened the space officially. Why do that in the atelier on a Monday morning?
It's the space where the fashion happens. The atelier is always separate and I wanted to put the spotlight on it. I thought it was important to draw attention to the people who work there. As everyone is, but they *really* are.

Who's in the atelier? How many people and what is their profile?
Maybe 10. It goes from a lady, who is maybe 60 years old, to a fashion student who is 20 years old. It's very varied.

My perception of Jacquemus the business, is that everyone is younger than you. And lots of people have arrived through internships.
Yes, lots of people came with internships, but the average age has begun to change now. We've taken on people with more experience.

It's changed over the last 12 months? It's becoming more professional?
Exactly. It remains a friendly, family-orientated business, but we haven't lost anything by gaining in efficiency and organization. I don't feel like I'm in a new world because I have a bigger building. It hasn't changed that much.

Where do you think this desire for fashion comes from? From your mother? Was she like that?
No, not really. I don't think so. I don't know. It's a weird question for me.

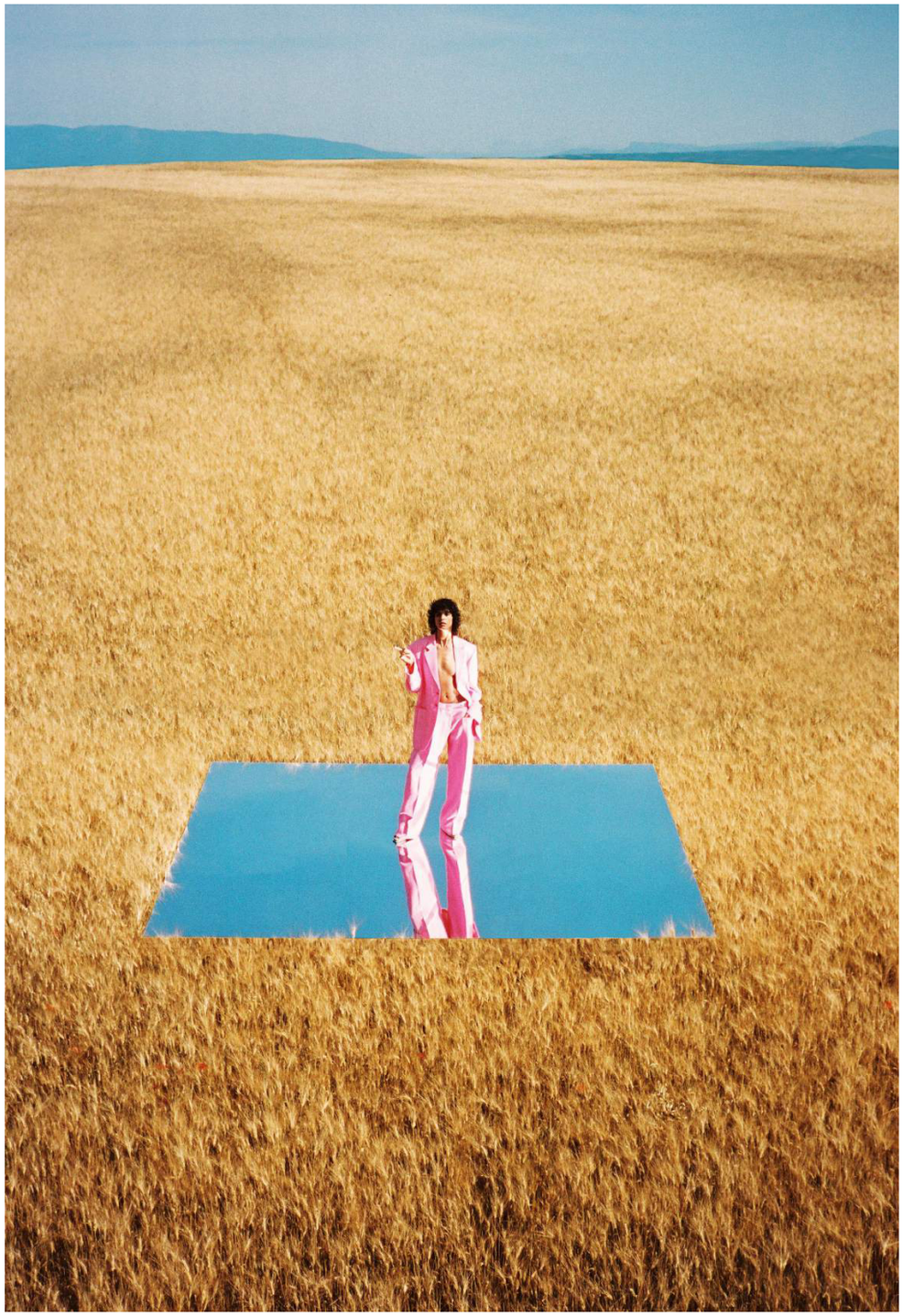
When I saw you at the party afer the show in Valensole, I was amazed to see quite how similar you are to your family, and I remember saying to myself, 'Ah, he's like that, because that's what they're like.'
I suppose I'm the same type of human as my family. That's why there's never been any shock with what I've done. Everything is always so fluid. When I tell my grandmother that I have doubts, she understands. When we organize parties in Valensole, it feels like I'm back at my grandparents' as a child, in the barn when they invited all the neighbours over and my father would climb onto the table, dressed as a woman, and dance with me. It was friendly and easy-going and it would do you good. Yes, I feel like I'm like that too. I've always been passionate about recounting things, telling stories. I think that's why I create fashion – and as long as I have stories to tell, I'll carry on.

'You open fashion week and get the impression of being the eighth wonder of the world. The following day, you go back to work, back to serving people.'

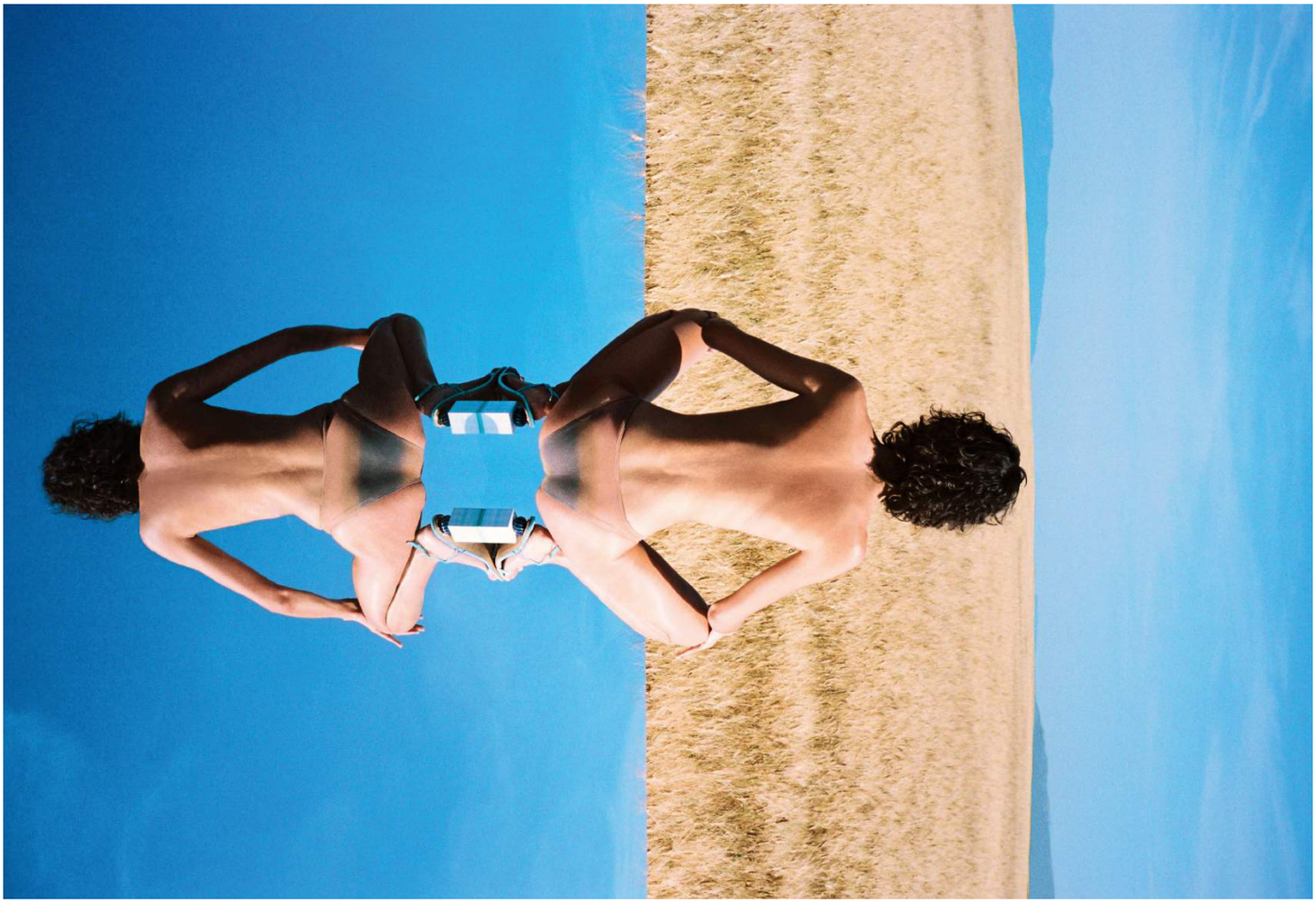
Simon Porte Jacquemus, aged six,
selling lavender in front of his family home in the south of France.

Jacquemus Spring/ Summer 2020

Photographs by Pierre-Ange Carlotti



Model: Mica Argañaraz. Hair stylist: Ramona Eschbach. Make-up artist: Marieke Thibaut. Producer: Elena Cavagnara



‘What was your big break?’

How some of the industry got into the industry.

Amber Valletta aged 18, after her hair had been cut short by Yannick D’Is.

Photo: James Breese.

Amber Valletta, model and actress

I wasn’t particularly into fashion growing up; I didn’t really know anything about it. I didn’t look at fashion magazines, and neither did my mom, but she enrolled me in a modelling school when I was 15 – one where you had to pay to take classes – because I wanted to act. After a couple of months, a scout came through and asked me if I would go to Europe for the summer. Of course I wanted to go: it was a big adventure! I did two weeks of test shots, and then I got my first job for *Vogue Italia*. I had no idea what I was supposed to be doing. I just knew how to goof around in front of a camera. I didn’t know then that I could make a professional career out of it. I was 15 years old, coming from Oklahoma. I was so green.

My big break came when I was 18 and I cut my hair short. I didn’t ask anyone around me; it was an instinctive thing. I went to the hairdresser Yannick D’Is, and he was, like, ‘You should do it.’ We didn’t do it right away, but when I bumped into him later at a fitting for Claude Montana, he said, ‘Now’s the time; let’s go do it!’ That moment was everything: they could finally see me as the girl I really was. I started being booked for shows: every magazine, every cover. And I met Kate Moss, when she’d just started modelling, and I met Shalom, too. Everybody joined the scene at the same time: it was a whole new era for fashion. All of these young people started to arrive: David Sims, Mario Sorrenti. A whole new generation of people: designers, stylists, photographers. Of course, there are other moments that stand out, like working with Steven Meisel, which I’m sure shifted my career in the beginning, or working with Peter Lindbergh or Craig McDean. Looking back on those moments, I think they added to the weight of my career, making it last for 30 years rather than two.

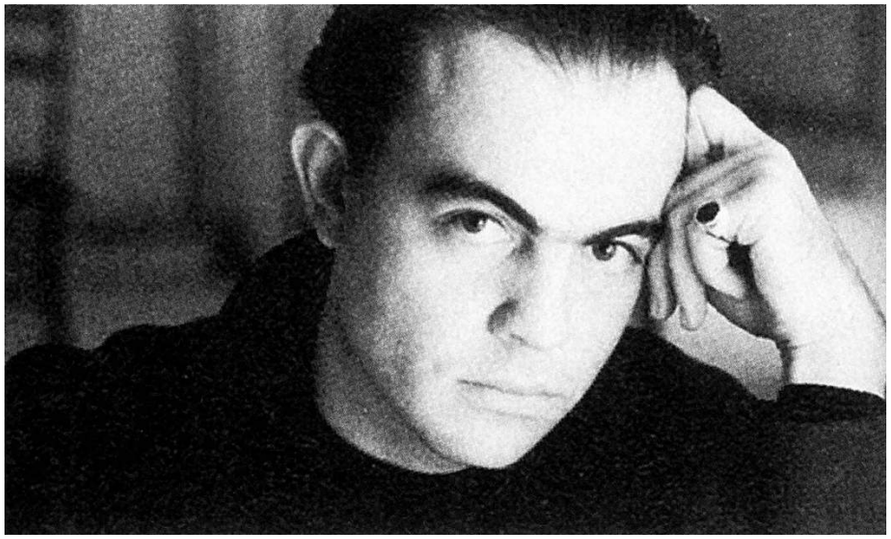


Photo: Jean François Gaté.

Christian Lacroix in 1986.

Christian Lacroix, designer

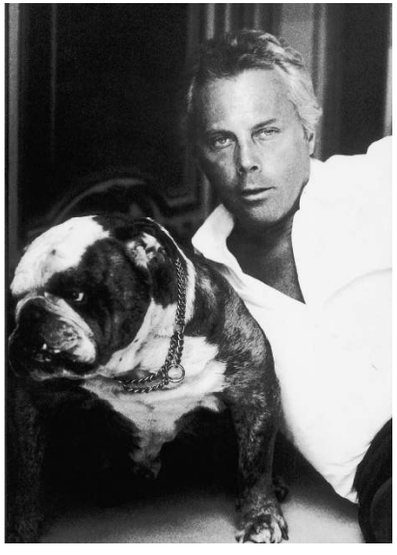
After graduating from Montpellier University in 1973, I did a course in art history. My teachers advised me to join the École du Louvre in Paris and the Sorbonne, but the only possible path following that was to become a museum curator. In Paris, costume museums didn't yet exist, and museums in general were classic, if not dusty. I felt trapped in a dead-end. As soon as I arrived in Paris, though, I met my wife Françoise, who encouraged me to showcase my sketches and have the courage to take my own path. I had it in mind to become a stage designer or even a fashion designer, since I was sketching opera productions and clothes that Françoise and I wanted to wear, but could never find in shops. A friend of ours, Nicole Bernardo, worked in fashion and introduced me to Marie Rucki, the head of Studio Berçot. I was too old to enrol – I was 25 – and her school was too expensive, so she kindly wrote letters to designers including Marc Bohan, then at Dior, Angelo Tarlazzi, and Karl Lagerfeld. As I already possessed a sense of fashion and colour, she also introduced me to Pierre Bergé, who owned Théâtre de l'Athénée. They all encouraged me.

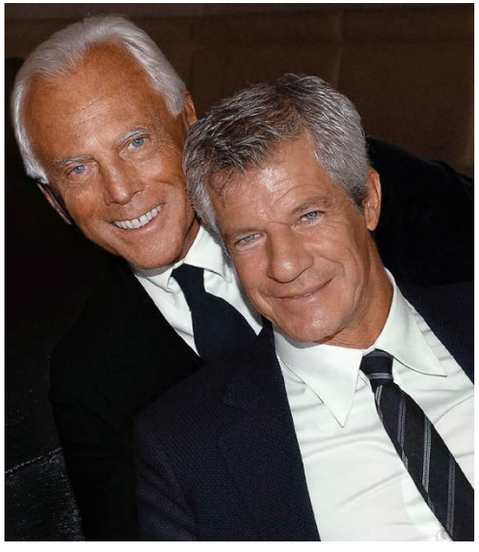
It might be impossible for young designers today to believe, but back then, it was easy to meet Karl Lagerfeld, who once spent an entire afternoon giving me advice. There were jobs everywhere, too: the stressful problem was which to choose. Jean-Jacques Picart offered my wife and I two positions: an internship at Hermés, which involved doing PR with him, and a design studio position with Nicole de Vesian, then in charge of styling with Catherine de Károlyi. Françoise chose to do PR with Mr Picart, and I chose the studio position, where I learned things I had never understood, such as how to build a collection.

Then, I received a phone call; a voice I didn't recognize asking me to work with him, using *tu* and not *vous*. I didn't dare ask his name, but nevertheless said, 'Yes, of course.' When I hung up, I didn't know who had given me a job. But when I got home later that day, my wife said it was Guy Paulin, and I had agreed to join him as an assistant in charge of accessories in Italy. There I learned a lot about fashion and colours, before leaving for Japan, where I worked with Jun Ashida, advising his company on how to incorporate a 'Parisian' touch.

Step by step, from 1978 to 1980, I became a freelance designer, all while designing cheap shoes in Italy. Then, in 1981, the designer in charge of couture at Patou, where Karl Lagerfeld, Marc Bohan and Jean Paul Gaultier had started, became ill. The family and board asked Mr Picart for some names, and among a list of famous figures of the period, Mr Picart included mine. To showcase my work, Inès de la Fressange agreed to go into the couture house one morning with a little suitcase containing some Ashida numbers, Italian shoes, and jewels and accessories I had done for Guy Paulin. She staged a mini fashion show on her own, with the charm we all know, and I got an interview. I was unknown and inexpensive, and I got the job just two months before the January couture show.

In a hurry, I improvised a mess: a mix of 18th-century, Morocco, Cinderella, *Death in Venice*, Arles, and Toulouse-Lautrec. The most influential reviewer of the time wrote that the collection appeared to have been made by the courier and the telephone girl. The following season, I chose one line – black-and-red only – and we got our first good review. By the third collection, the applause at the end of the show was so great that the Patou family and chairman pushed me onto the runway in tears, carrying flowers. That led me to my first Golden Thimble in 1986 and, in 1987, my CFDA award for international designer of the year, just before I met Mr Arnault and built the House of Lacroix.



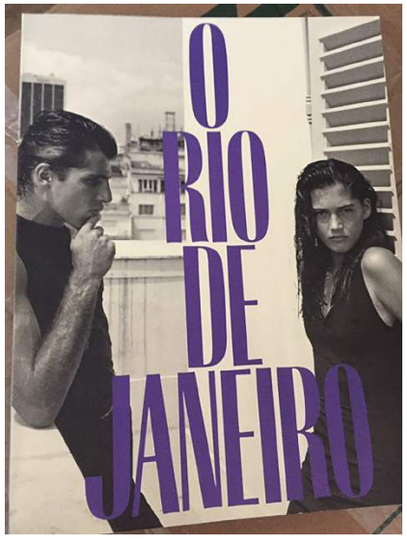


Giorgio Armani with his dog Gigi in 1979 (left) and with Leo Dell'Orco in 2000 (right).

Giorgio Armani, designer, chief executive and chairman, Giorgio Armani

I consider Leo Dell'Orco to be my right-hand man. I met him 45 years ago while strolling around Milan with my dog Gigi, who ran up to him wagging his tail, as though he knew him. That's how he came into my life – so unexpectedly – and he has been by my side ever since. He is the person to whom I have entrusted my most private thoughts, and he keeps them to himself, always with great discretion. He has always been close to me, first during my business partner Sergio Galeotti's illness and then over the years, working alongside me in formulating the stylistic direction of the men's lines. What I appreciate most about his personality is his wonderful quality of being able to smile when you first meet him in the morning. And then his tenacity and enthusiasm, and, above all, his great heart of gold. I believe that his presence, sometimes discreet and sometimes lively, has helped to bring me out of my timid and reserved character.

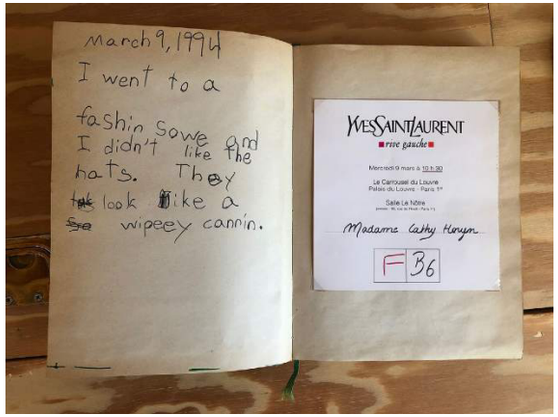
Courtesy of Giorgio Armani.

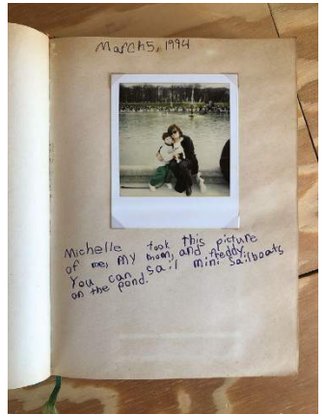


Bruce Weber, *O Rio De Janeiro* (1986).

Joe McKenna, stylist

I started out in 1985. I had never assisted. There were only a few stylists working then, and it was impossible to get a foot in the door at *Vogue* or *Bazaar*. I didn't know how a fashion shoot worked; I could only imagine it. I did some tests, and I was lucky they ran in *The Face* and *Tatler*, but it was difficult to get work. There wasn't the volume of work that there is today. One evening in November that year, my phone rang. The voice on the other end said: 'Oh hi, is that Joe? This is Bruce Weber.' I had never met Bruce or spoken to him, but I was a huge fan of his work. I had only ever dreamed of working with him. I actually thought it was a friend playing a prank. 'Would you like to come to Rio and work on some pictures? Just bring a few swimsuits,' he said. I was thrilled. Those pictures became the book *O Rio de Janeiro*, published in 1986. I owe my break to Bruce Weber.





Pages from Cathy Horyn's son's scrapbook when he accompanied his mother to the Autumn/Winter 1994 show season in Paris.

Cathy Horyn, writer

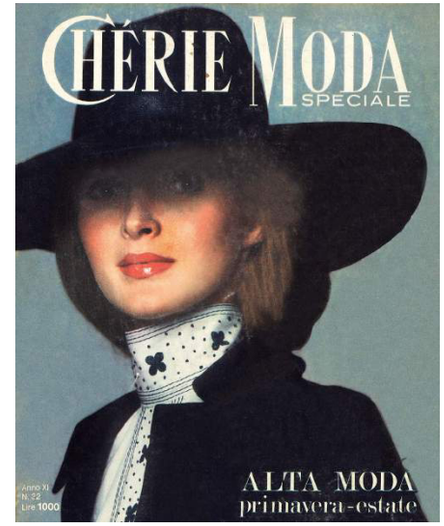
I didn't grow up with fashion, and I didn't hanker to be a fashion journalist, but one day, when I was working at *The Virginian Pilot* newspaper, I was very pregnant and was sitting at the desk of the night-rewrite guy. He had a copy of *Editor and Publisher* magazine, which had all the job offers in it. There was an ad for *The Detroit News* for a fashion writer: no fashion experience necessary; must be a good writer. I answered the ad and they brought me in for an interview with a woman named Susan Wyland. She asked me to do a try-out: I basically had to conjure up two story ideas that were vaguely in the news, but showed my interpretation of fashion. They got published and that was the start of it.

Sure, there were days when I was out of my depth, when things weren't going my way and I felt like I was in high school again. I mean, in the first year, I went to Milan and stayed in a hotel that was near the airport. I just didn't know, and clearly the travel agent didn't know either. I had to take a taxi and the bus in! But once I got over that first year of making dumb mistakes, the beat got more interesting and there were more layers to it, more to do. By the time I got to the *Washington Post* in 1990, I'd spent four years in Detroit. I felt that I had a voice, that I knew the kinds of stories I wanted to write, and that I knew how to be a critic.

I felt that way well into my time at the *New York Times*; I thought I knew a lot when I got there, but eventually realized I didn't. At the *Times*, I spent more time going to couture, which I didn't do when I was at the *Washington Post*. Understanding how the clothes are made, who the clients are, how that part of the business operates: it was a whole other world.

In terms of the people I've met along the way, I used to love chatting to the girls at the shows: I would sit and watch and be fascinated by them. I eventually came to know Marina Schiano, who just died. Candy Pratts Price, Phyllis Posnick: I learned a lot from them. They saw clothes in a way I didn't.

If I had to single out one person, though, I'd have to say Bill Blass. We connected when I was in Detroit. He'd come up for the auto show as part of his relationship with Ford; it was strictly a branding thing. Later, when I got to Washington, I used to go to the 550 Building when I was in New York and stop on Bill's floor, where he'd fill me in on everything. He made me feel like I was an insider, like I had graduated to another level of the business.



Chérie Moda, September 1971 issue.

Carla Sozzani, founder, 10 Corso Como

I was always wildly into fashion. When I was 16, I would buy Pucci like crazy, and my father would get very upset. At the same time, I remember him taking me to Paris in about 1966. We went to the Courrèges shop, and he bought me this incredible, bright-yellow vinyl tunic with matching pants. It remains an extremely vivid memory.

I always loved magazines, too. I was addicted to Alexey Brodovitch's work at *Bazaar*, obsessed with the graphics and the photography, and the way the models moved. I was always cutting the pages out, reassembling them, wanting to make magazines myself, wanting to be part of that world.

By 1967, I was at university and living in London a lot of the time. I actually had my university card taken away from me because I was wearing a suit. They said a woman could not attend university wearing trousers, which was ironic, because ultimately what that time in London taught me was freedom. Everything had been so strict, and, in a matter of months, we went from absolute conservatism to total freedom: to dream, to think, to dress the way you wanted. That had a profound effect on me.

In 1968, there was the political revolution in Italy and it was impossible to study unless you were politically active, which I was not. I remember being on holiday with a friend in Sardinia in 1968, when my father sent me a telegram, saying, 'You're behaving like a spoiled child! Come back and study or go to work!' So I came home and started work for a friend of my mother, who had a chain of specialist magazines: children, knitwear, haute couture, cuisine, brides, clothing patterns. My first job was at *Chérie Moda* magazine: a half day here and there, then full-time. And I started to go to Florence, to see collections at Palazzo Strozzi and Palazzo Pitti.

Then I would go to Rome for the haute couture. I met everyone from Valentino to Sorelle Fontana. And then ready-to-wear in Milan. Working at these magazines gave me a wide vision; beyond fashion, to culture, food, art, design, lifestyle. I met Anna Piaggi through her husband, the photographer Alfa Castaldi, and she introduced me to people like Manolo Blahnik and Walter Albini. I was still only 20, so Anna and Alfa were kind of my mentors.

All of the skills I was learning were part of one single thing: the editorial experience. I learned how to edit, so when I opened my gallery in 1989, and then 10 Corso Como in 1991, I was approaching them with an editorial eye. For me, it has always been about editing: editing photography, editing exhibitions, editing fashion, accessories, design. This is what I love and enjoy, and always will.

Pierre Cardin in his Paris atelier, 1960.

Pierre Cardin, designer and entrepreneur

I always wanted to be a couturier. In 1936, aged 14, I began my apprenticeship with a tailor in Vichy. After the war, I began working for Paquin in 1945, then for Schiaparelli, but it was meeting Jean Cocteau that allowed me to live my dream and begin working at Dior. As first tailor at the house, I was part of the success of the Bar suit, which defined the New Look. That gave me the desire and strength to strike out by myself and set up my own house.

I was ambitious; I had ideas; I wanted to succeed. I immediately put all of my ferocious energy into raising awareness of my name. From the beginning, I wanted to develop my designs and make them accessible to as many people as possible. That drove me to create a formal licensing system and to design ready-to-wear. My inexhaustible energy, my independence, and the facility with which I drew and designed also helped. My style, my appetite for experimentation, for inventive forms and new technologies, my unusual geometric shapes: all were immediately popular. I think my strength also came from my character.

The political and economic context of the time was undeniably simpler than it is now. What I accomplished then would simply no longer be possible today. Times have obviously changed, even if the globalized movement of goods and trade has been simplified. Bureaucratic difficulties and slowness remain a brake on more entrepreneurial spirits, though, which I am sorry about. I took revenge on life, and with the end of the war, the wind of freedom that blew across Paris gave me the wings to succeed.

Jean Paul Gaultier at the time he was assisting Pierre Cardin,
as seen in the documentary *Personnage: l'empire Cardin* by Adrian Maben (1970).

Photo: Pierre Cardin Archives.

Collection Variances/INA.

Jean Paul Gaultier, designer

I got my big break with Pierre Cardin on the day of my 18th birthday. I had decided that I wanted to be a couturier after seeing Jacques Becker's film *Falbalas*, about a tragic love affair in a Paris couture house in the 1940s. I was 11 or 12, and I started reading fashion magazines and drawing my own collections. I would see that a couturier had presented 300 outfits and I would draw 320 to outdo him. I would even write my own reviews. By the time I was 17 I had sent my sketches to every couture house in Paris. On my 18th birthday I came home from school and my mother told me that Monsieur Cardin had called, and that I should go to meet him that same afternoon. I was so scared, I asked her to go with me. I got the job, but as I was still at school I could only work a few days a week. When the couture show finished and the school holidays started, I went on holiday without asking for permission. I got a good scolding when I came back. Monsieur Cardin taught me that freedom is the most important thing. Freedom to live your life as you want and to create as you feel, regardless of conventions. I owe him everything.

Ed Filipowski with his then KCD boss Kezia Keeble in the offices of Keeble Cavaco & Duka Public Relations, New York City, 1988.

Photo: Ron Galella/Ron Galella Collection via Getty Images.

Ed Filipowski, co-chairman, KCD

I was not born into fashion; I aspired to fashion from a small town in Pittsburgh. I came to New York and I couldn't quite find my way into the right doors, so I first worked at an ad agency and a non-fashion PR firm.

I got my first job by reading. I read about the hot advertising and PR firm Keeble Cavaco and Duka (KCD) and its president Kezia Keeble, who had come from *Vogue*. I read that Keeble was a super stylist who worked with Steven Meisel, Bruce Weber, and Richard Avedon. I read how she was one of the most beautiful women around, so striking in her Chanel suits, and how she was working with John Duka on the *New York Times* as well as Paul Cavaco, who was working with Bruce Weber. I also read that they landed the Charivari account, which was the hot store on 57th Street where I would go on my lunchbreak to spend money I didn't have on Gaultier leather biker jackets to wear clubbing.

As a creative kid, I had the idea to send Kezia flowers in a Charivari bag. I went to Zezé, still one of New York's top florists, bought some flowers I couldn't afford, and sent them to Kezia with a note saying congratulations on landing Charivari, and if you are looking for somebody to work for you, I would love to talk to you. A day later, I got a phone call. This voice said: 'I'm Kezia Keeble. I don't know who you are, but you happen to have sent me my favourite flowers – freesias – and, I don't know, but I just feel that I need to talk to you.'

She brought me in for an interview the next evening and I sat by her desk, scared witless. We talked for three hours. I remember that she caught on halfway through that I knew nothing about fashion, because at one point she looked at me and said, who is Polly Mellen? She was one of the top stylists at *Vogue* at that time, and I honestly didn't know, so I said so. There was a dead silence for maybe about three minutes. She offered me a job that night, but later on she laughingly told me that she almost didn't, because I didn't know who Polly Mellen was. Miss Mellen always enjoyed that story later on. Kezia became my mentor, and I haven't left KCD since.

Julie de Libran (right) on stage with Marc Jacobs and Donna Summer, at the launch of the Louis Vuitton Bond Street *maison* store, 2010.

Photo: Richard Young.

Julie de Libran, founder and creative director, Dress by Julie de Libran

It's a hard one, as all of the experiences I've had working alongside different designers have contributed to how I create today. My first job was in the Milan studio of Gianfranco Ferré, where I observed every step of creating a collection. We had these closets filled with shapes of clothes: 'volumes', I guess you could say. I would drape and pin them on a fitting model in the atelier, and he would sketch from that. At Gianni Versace, I was lucky to be close to the ateliers, which were in the same building. I would spend hours on end there, developing my understanding of the construction of the clothes: pattern-making, draping, even assembling chainmail dresses with pliers.

And then the 10 and a half years – I insist on those last six months – I spent at Prada, from 1998. It felt very 'fashion', very contemporary. I learned so much about the business by working close to Miuccia Prada and Patrizio Bertelli, while being pushed to creative extremes in order to fulfil Miuccia's vision. But it was during my time at Louis Vuitton, working with Marc Jacobs from 2008, when I really felt I was given my big break. Marc was so extremely generous, and really let me work in the first person. If I had to single out a particular moment, it would have to be in 2010 when the Louis Vuitton *maison* reopened on Bond Street in London. I was pulled on stage with Marc, alongside Donna Summer, who was wearing one of my dresses. I have no idea how it happened, but there I was, singing 'On the Radio' to a crowd that included Catherine Deneuve! I'm usually extremely shy, but after that, I knew that I'd come out of my shell. Singing on stage helped me realize that I can do things on my own – it prepared me to take centre stage in my career.

'Domestic Bliss', featuring Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, photographed by Steven Klein; *W* magazine, July 2005 issue.

Dennis Freedman, creative director

At *W* magazine, where I was creative director, our July issue was generally the only one in the year when we'd feature a guy on the cover, and for 2005, Brad Pitt was supposed to be that guy. He was arguably the world's biggest male movie star, and, given the intense media speculation at the time surrounding his relationship with Angelina Jolie – despite still being married to Jennifer Aniston – he was magazine gold dust.

With this on my mind, I phoned Brad's publicist, essentially to confirm what we already knew – that there'd be absolutely *no* way he'd agree to the cover request – so we could just move on. She graciously said that she'd talk to him anyway, and then called me back to say, 'Dennis, I just spoke to Brad and he wants to do the cover. But on one condition: that it's a photo essay in which he and Angelina Jolie play a married couple with five children.' Having already worked with Brad in past, we had established not just a level of trust, but a level of confidence. He knew that if we were going to do this, it was going to be a major collaboration. On Brad's suggestion, the shoot would be set in 1963, the era of the Kennedy assassination.

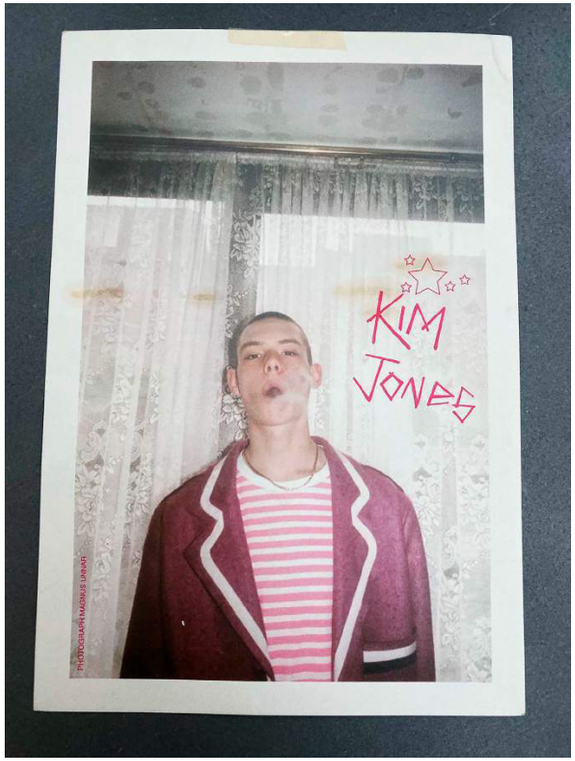
We had exactly one week to make it happen. I knew I wanted to work with Steven Klein, and that we'd be shooting in a house in Palm Springs. Steven and I created a precise storyboard, something we rarely ever do. It was fascinating to see just how invested Brad was in the imagery and the storyline: he was very serious about that moment in American history; in one of the images, they are watching coverage of the assassination on a vintage television.

America in the 1960s was a time when everything was changing. This was 1963, which was not far from the 1950s, and a simpler time for America, until the assassination happened. If you look at the pictures, they really address that shift towards violence: in one image, they're the perfect family, saying grace at the dinner table; turn the page and there's the picture of Brad holding a gun and then another with him grabbing Angelina by the throat. This was domestic violence in a 60-page portfolio entitled 'Domestic Bliss'; it was a mirror held up to America. With its meaning further heightened by the rumours about Jennifer Aniston and Brad. None of which, of course, was discussed. To be frank, it is still unclear to me what Brad's motivations were at the time.

Fortunately, at *W*, we'd established the credibility at that point to pull off something like this shoot. For me, it became a transformative moment, one that could only happen if you set the precedent, if the soil is fertile. Reflecting on those pictures today, the story certainly wasn't my initial 'big break' into the industry; it wasn't the moment we hit our stride at the magazine, either – we had already done that – but it was the kind of moment that becomes an extraordinary cultural signifier, one that goes right to the heart of society, beyond anyone's expectations.

Gaia Repossi, creative director, Repossi

A vivid, lucid memory. My first big break. 2010. The *Berbère* Collection. A sudden reaction to an efficient design. Timeless. Correct. Charged with an ancestral language. It spoke. Simple design loud enough to scream. Every finger, every hand like a flowing river of gold. Energy unleashed. I was freed. The engine ready to start. The visuals of the campaign narrated a strong, almost albino creature staring from above. Nothing to prove. No more false messages. Just the first syllables of a new statement: Repossi born again.



'An image that accompanied my exhibition at the Pineal Eye in London, when I graduated in 2001.'

Kim Jones, artistic director, Dior Men

I was very fortunate at the beginning of my career. I was working at Gimme Five in London and had already met several influential people, when I did an installation with my graduate collection at the Pineal Eye in Soho. Then I went to Japan for the first time, and when I arrived back, I found that John Galliano had purchased a part of my collection, which I guess was a big compliment. Shortly after that, Keith Warren, the head of Louis Vuitton menswear asked me to do some prints for a collection, and shortly after that I met Lee McQueen, who became a friend.

Karl Lagerfeld illustration, 1992.

Michel Gaubert, DJ and producer

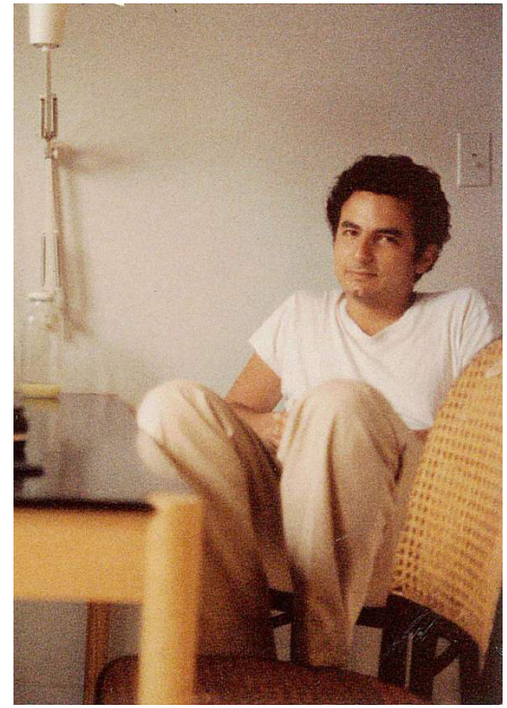
September 1989: The scene is Champs Disques, a really good record store for which I was the buyer. Karl Lagerfeld was coming to visit almost every day to get his supply of new sounds. One afternoon his studio came over and told me, 'Karl would like you to create the music for his upcoming show.' The inspiration they gave me was the album *Waltz Darling* by Malcolm McLaren. I liked it. It somehow fitted the idea I had of Karl Lagerfeld's musical mind. An hour later, I said yes. And then I wondered why I said yes. I started to doubt that I could do it. I knew I had the power to do it, but I did not have the technical knowledge to make it happen the way I wanted. Insecurity got the better of me. I doubted my capacity to be up to the expectations of someone like Karl Lagerfeld, and I did not want to disappoint the audience attending the show. I did so much research: of operas, operettas, waltzes. I was determined to find the right ingredients. Then I called Dimitri from Paris – who I had also met at Champs Disques – to help me match them onto Frankie Knuckles, De La Soul, and Soul II Soul. He jumped on board right away. The soundtrack turned out great and was quite impressive at the time. It was the beginning of a 30-year relationship with Karl, and we teamed up with Dimitri from Paris for a few years after that.

Insecurity is your worst enemy. Determination and will are key, and if you believe you can do it, you will make it happen. There's no need to be afraid – just trust your instincts.

'She was helping carrying the shoes too.'

Fabrizio Viti, shoe style director, Louis Vuitton

My career started last century, and I can think of a number of fundamental moments:
1. My encounter with a photocopier in my very first job as a studio-assistant-slash-housekeeper. I discovered that anything powered by *elettricità* is not for me.
2. My first day in a shoe factory in the middle of nowhere, as the assistant to Patrick Cox. I felt that it would be not the last time.
3. The last Louis Vuitton Cruise show in New York. It's all worth it when you are part of something like that.
4. The first time I presented my own brand of shoes to the world, there was a strike in Paris and we had to carry boxes and boxes of shoes by hand in the rain. My advice is to stay grounded.



Jean Touitou, New York City, early 1980s.

Jean Touitou, founder, A.P.C.

I never thought about fashion to begin with; it wasn't a goal. Fashion wasn't even attractive to me – a beautiful silhouette was. Also, I wanted to be around hard-working and fun creative individuals. While I wasn't really watching 'fashion', I could see that some designers had a vision, and I could figure out that some would endure and that some would be forgotten. I was more interested in factories, retailers, printers, fabric and yarn suppliers, and tanneries, than in the people in the fashion spotlight. So I took a job at Kenzo as a warehouse worker. I used to wash classic English men's suiting cloth in my bathtub, so that it would lose its corporate spirit, and presented collections in my apartment. After some years, I made collections that finally got some attention, but what I wanted to do wasn't commercial enough for me to rely on. As a ghost designer and producer, brands from the fashion industry financed me, so that I could do what I wanted. I would make money designing and producing 'sexy' stuff for other brands, so that I could finance my unsexy looks – which were the sexiest to me.

An image from the series entitled *Ceremony*, 2006.

Alasdair McLellan, photographer

My first big break was in 2002 when Julie Brown from MAP Agency took an interest in my work and asked if she could represent me. Obviously, I said yes. Julie's got an amazing eye, and she was very warm, so I was very attracted to working with her. She then introduced me to Joe McKenna, with whom I worked on a shoot in my hometown, Doncaster. He's a stylist who everyone adores and respects, so working with him meant a lot – people take notice of who he's working with. It was awhile before Julie took me on fully because she felt that I wasn't quite ready. I'd go in to see her, go off to do more work, then go back to see her again.

It's true that you continue to get big breaks as you go on, like the Miu Miu campaign and Michael and Mathias from M/M Paris doing the art direction of all my books. I never assisted anyone, so it took me a bit longer to crack the industry. You do see other people who are assisting get breaks, because they are getting to meet magazine editors, hair and make-up people, and a lot of other creative people on set.

Within my first week of moving to London, I also met editor and journalist Jo-Ann Furniss, and we've been good friends ever since. I was taking my folio around various magazines and she happened to see my work when she was interning. She said how much she liked it, and we just got on. We have a similar point of view on things, and while our meeting might not be considered a 'big break', meeting her meant a lot; we formed a special relationship and have since gone on to do really amazing and big projects together.

People can often be very critical of fashion photography, but what I have always liked about fashion is how you can really create any world you wish from scratch, and you get a platform, like a magazine, to put it in. I like the fact that you can almost do anything you want to as long as you've got clothing in the picture. It has a point to it, but you also have complete freedom.

Alexa Chung on the set of *Popworld,* 2006.

Alexa Chung, model and designer

When I was 22, I was made co-host of a television show on Channel 4 in the UK called *Popworld*. It was irreverent, anarchic and fun. We interviewed musicians from around the world with the kind of sardonic disdain that only a very young, inexperienced Brit could muster. This was 2007, so the bands coming through were Red Hot Chili Peppers, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Gwen Stefani and her Harajuku girls, or Beth Ditto and the Gossip. Once *Popworld* aired, people became increasingly interested in what I was wearing each week, which was usually a mixture of vintage, Topshop and Balenciaga jeans, and eventually that eclipsed what I was saying. I miss that TV show, it was a riot.

Sasha P for *i-D*, 2006,
photographed by Daniel Jackson.

Alastair McKimm, editor in chief, *i-D*

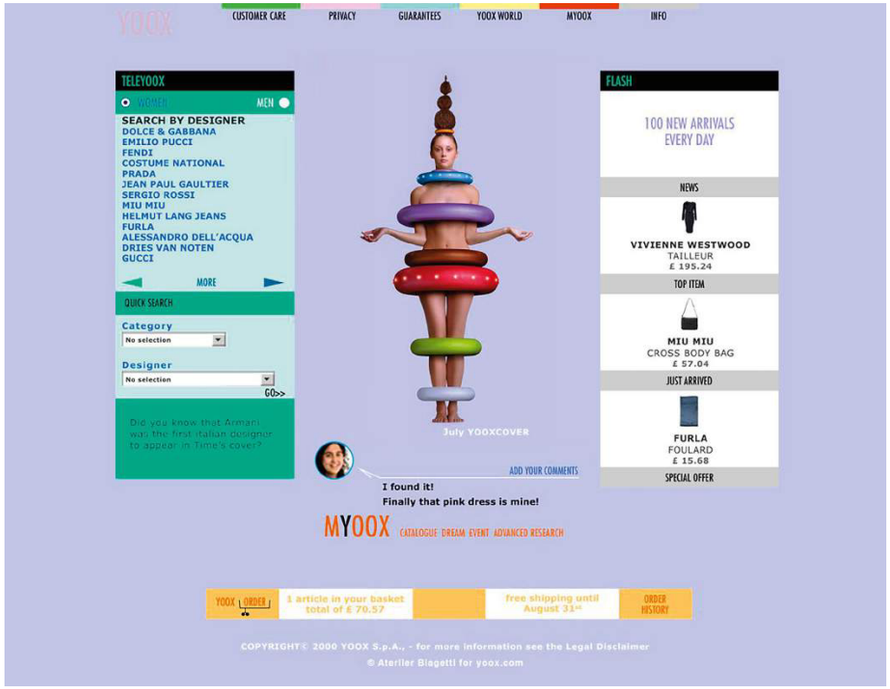
A lot led up to this moment, but the series I styled for *i-D* in 2006 with photographer Daniel Jackson felt like a real turning point. I had styled a few small pieces, pages and spreads before, but this was my first main fashion story for the magazine. It was long before I had edit approval or even saw any kind of layout, so I only saw the story when it was on a newsstand in Carnaby Street in early September. For the first time, I felt I might have a future in this.

Photo: Michael Heeg.

The Missoni family on the runway post-show, 1990.

Margherita Missoni, creative director, M Missoni

My first break into fashion must have been when I was five or six years old. My grandparents would still go out on to the catwalk at the end of a show, and my cousins, my siblings and I would be sitting on the floor of the front row among the crowd. That year, as soon as they walked out, one of us started running and went up on to the catwalk, so we all followed and we walked the whole catwalk with the models. We did that for the following few years.



The first YOOX landing page, 2000.

Federico Marchetti, chairman and CEO, YOOX Net-a-Porter Group

I came up with the idea for YOOX in late 1999, quit my job and quickly built a business plan. It was a race against time, though nobody knew then just how true that was. Back then, venture capital was non-existent in Italy. I cold-called one of Milan's few tech investors and made my pitch. He liked it immediately and invested €1.5 million up front, promising another €6 million if we had the website up and running in three months. We worked around the clock to get YOOX off the ground. And we stayed focused even as the dotcom bubble crashed down around us and Europe began to adjust to a new single currency.

I'll never forget the moment the homepage went live. We did a countdown and ended up having to repeat the last minute: '5, 4, 3, 2, 1... 59, 58…' But then we were live. We made our first sale in the first second, to a woman in the Netherlands who bought a Versace dress for 88,000 Italian lira. That was our big break. One hundred more purchases followed in the first few days. An entrepreneur never really knows how good an idea is until customers buy into it.

Michael Kors, as photographed for his debut *Vogue* feature, 1981.

Courtesy of Michael Kors; photo: Christophe von Hohenberg.

Michael Kors, founder and creative director, Michael Kors

While I was studying at FIT, I needed a job and I knew I wanted to work in retail. One day, I went into Lothar's, a boutique on 57th Street across the street from Bergdorf Goodman that specialized in French sportswear and sold the most expensive tie-dye jeans you could buy. I'm in there mooning over all the clothes and someone says to me, 'You know, we're hiring people to work in the store part-time.' I took the job, of course, and it was the most amazing learning experience because I got to see how people shopped. People would come in and buy the same pair of jeans in 10 colours. I sold jeans to Jackie Kennedy, to Goldie Hawn, to Rudolf Nureyev. It was at Lothar's that I realized that people who can have anything want it all. They want to be glamorous but feel comfortable at the same time. Even the most indulgent person can be practical. A few months later, they asked me what I thought was missing in the store, and before I knew it, I was designing a soup-to-nuts collection. I was given carte-blanche at 19 years old. I designed based on my mood and the customers: one week it was a trench coat, the next it was an evening gown, and the week after that it was a T-shirt and bathing suit. It was my entrée into thinking about a wardrobe.

One day, Dawn Mello goes walking by while I'm dressing the windows. She comes inside and says, 'Excuse me, these are not the same clothes that Lothar's has always carried. Do you know anything about the clothes?' She thought I was just the display guy. I said, 'Well, I designed them.' And she said, 'Well, if you ever decide to go into business on your own, give me a call.' I went home that night and started sketching my first collection.

I set up a meeting with Dawn and the people at Bergdorf's and very quickly whipped together a collection. We made the samples with rented sewing machines in my apartment on 23rd Street. Everything came in two sizes: P or S. I went back to Bergdorf's and said, 'I want to do a trunk show.' I wasn't even entirely sure what a trunk show was, but I knew that Bill Blass and Oscar de la Renta did them. Bergdorf's agreed, and I called all the women I knew from Lothar's. They came and I sold most of what we had there that day. I've been in Bergdorf's ever since.

'I had just moved back to New York City with the *Financial Times*, in 2008, after 12 years in London. I left a non-fashion person, and came back a fashion person, and this picture sort of represents that to me.'

Vanessa Friedman, fashion director and chief fashion critic, *New York Times*

'Break' is a funny word for me to think about, because I would never have considered the fulcrum on which my career turned, or the door I walked through to be a break at the time. It was kind of an accident, a happenstance. If we're talking about what one would think of as a classic break, I would say it was when I became fashion editor at the *Financial Times*. It was the first time I had ever done an all-fashion job. That was in 2003, but in 1997 or 1998, not long after I arrived in the UK as a freelancer, I sent a cold pitch to Lucia van der Post, who was an editor at the *FT*. I don't even remember the story I was pitching; it was probably culture-related because that's largely what I was writing about at the time. She looked at my resumé, assumed that I was a fashion writer because I had worked at *Vogue* in the US, and assigned me a story on boots. At that point, if someone had assigned me a story on tyre treads, I would have done it if they had paid me. I became her freelance fashion contributor, and at one point I had a contract to write about fashion for the *FT* for about a year. Later, after leaving the *FT*, joining *InStyle* as features editor, and having two children, I ended up back at the *FT* as its fashion editor. At the time, I was pretty sure that I had entered the world of fashion. But I found becoming a full-time fashion person to be a complicated mental evolution. I had grown up in a world where fashion was not considered a particularly serious subject, or something that serious people would study or do. I once told a banker at Rothschild's that I was fashion editor at the *FT*, and he laughed so hard I thought he was going to have a heart attack, like, 'They have a fashion editor!' It's not a reaction guaranteed to fill you with joy. They had actually only just created the role, so when I decided to go back and apply for the job, it just seemed like a really interesting challenge: trying to understand what fashion means in a place that is not a fashion-focused outlet, that was for a cultured, well-travelled, educated readership that thought about lots of other things and had to get dressed. I felt that that reflected my own relationship to fashion, to the role it played in my own life. It made me realize that fashion is an incredibly important and rich subject that everyone in the world thinks about whether they want to admit it or not: everyone gets dressed and makes choices about what to put on their body. It is a huge part of human communication. All the things I was interested in – identity politics, sociology, philosophy – are contained in fashion. It is a fantastic subject, but those starting out should learn about everything else before they learn about fashion, because it is all part of the same thing. All of these subjects are connected.

Ivan Bart, president, IMG Models

I thought I was going to have a career in healthcare. I majored in psychology, but took time off after college to travel to Europe. I was a kid from Brooklyn and hadn't really travelled; visiting other countries, cultures and languages, I realized what had been missing in my life. I grew my hair very long, and there I was, travelling around Europe, digging my long hair, talking to some women in Greece, and they asked me what I would do when I returned to America. My answer: I just want to travel around the world and have long hair. After I got back to New York, I decided to get my masters in psychology. I began work for a therapist, but because this therapist was sort of famous, I basically worked in a PR capacity, booking them to speak at engagements. That led to my first PR gig at Grosik and Partners, which had a modelling agency attached to it.

I'm a night owl, so I was up late when I saw a commercial for the Ritz Thrift Shop, a vintage clothing store on 57th Street in Manhattan. This was 1986, and the commercial was probably filmed in 1968, yet they were still running it: a woman getting out of a cab. I called up the shop and said, 'Listen, my firm could really help you.' I must have been about 21. He was really offended and hung up the phone, but I kept calling until finally I got a meeting. He came to the agency. I was so junior, I didn't even think I would be invited into the meeting, and I was sitting at my desk when I got a tap on the shoulder and heard: 'The gentleman will not have this meeting without you.' I walked in, and he said, 'I'm here because Ivan called me, and told me you guys can help, so explain to me how that is going to happen.' I did most of the talking, explaining why I thought their commercial wasn't reflective of the modern woman and the guy hired us. My boss was so impressed, he said: 'I want to give you a raise *and* a promotion. What do you want to do?' And, pointing towards the modelling agency, I said, 'I want to work there.'

So, I did. My career gradually built as I changed firms, and about three or four years later, on the plane journey home from Milan, I suddenly realized that I had accomplished exactly what I had set out to do: to have long hair and travel the world! And that inspired me to cut my hair off.

Studying psychology was totally applicable to managing talent, because a talent manager manages people. Good people skills are one thing, but reading Carl Jung and Freud helps with understanding human behaviour and people's motivations. When I'm talking with a talent, I am also coaching them on how people might react to things, what they need to communicate, and what they can expect, be it from a photography shoot or just a meeting. I have met some fantastic mentors and people along the way whom I have always acknowledged: Mark Grosik, Eileen Ford, Mark McCormack from IMG, Ted Forstmann, Mark Shapiro, Ari Emanuel, and Patrick Whitesell. Through my career, I have become more educated in the business of fashion, design, designers, editors, and everything else that goes into the business I love.

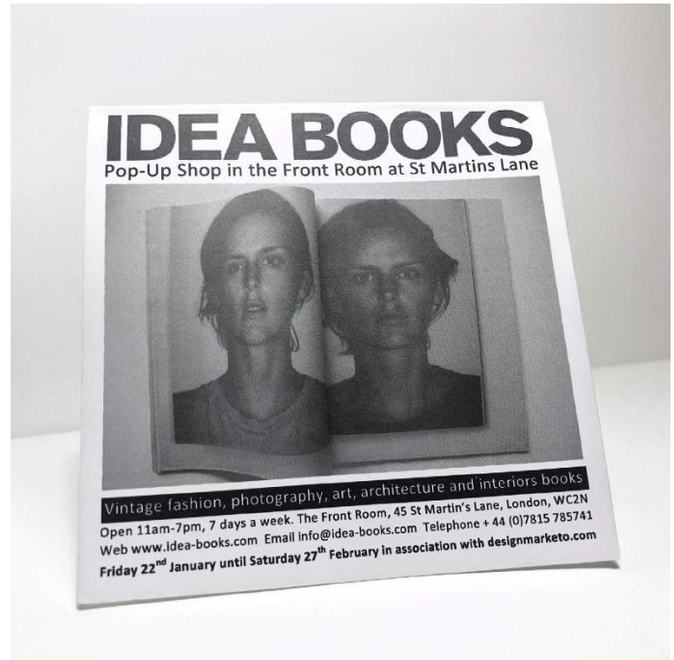
I think you just have to have an intention, like having long hair and wanting to travel around the world. You don't have to know what you want to do, you just have to have an intention.

Victoire de Castellane in the Chanel offices, Paris, 1987.

Victoire de Castellane, creative director, Dior Joaillerie

I always really enjoyed fashion, and loved creating looks for myself, but I was never really looking to work in the industry. At the time, fashion in my mind was a free environment populated by people who took themselves very seriously, some of whom were incredibly talented. I ended up working in fashion totally by coincidence.

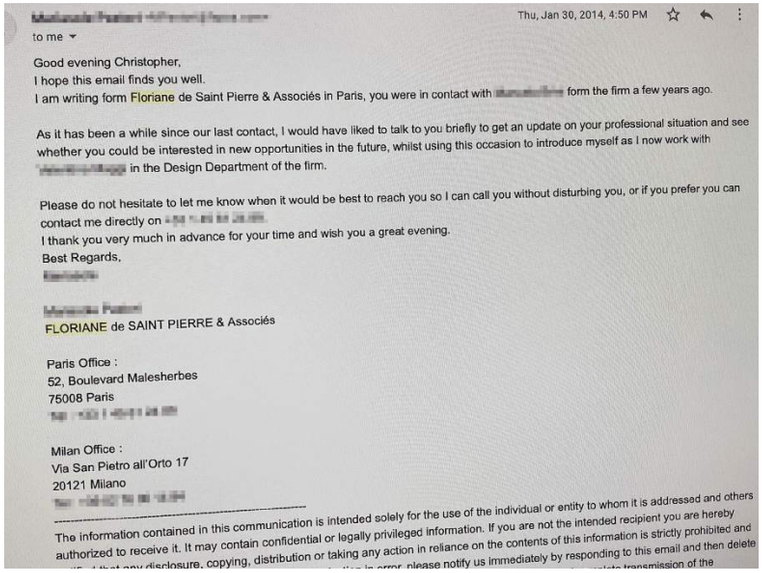
My professional life has been interspersed with important encounters, but the one that led me into fashion came at Chanel, when I went there to lend a friend of mine a hand with sending invitations for a couture show. Karl knew me through my uncle Gilles Dufour, who was his assistant at the time, and suggested that I stay. Back then, the success of a house came from its creative freedom, and the sentiment invested in the work. Everything was there for the making. Everything was possible.



Flyer for IDEA Books' first pop-up store, 2009.

David Owen, co-founder, IDEA Books

In 2009, I was making a comedy series in London for American cable television. I won't even say what the series was called: it's not famous, or known, or even any good. My partner, Angela, walked past the St Martins Lane Hotel and saw its shop space, which had originally been designed by Philippe Starck but was being used as a room to store luggage. She asked if she could have it as a pop-up shop. At that point we sold some vintage books through Dover Street Market under the name of Angela Hill. The hotel said yes and gave Angela the space for three months: the whole summer! So we went for it. I quit the TV company and called Vitsoe about shelves. They installed a complete shop fit in a day. We needed a name and came up with IDEA Books (now IDEA: the initials of Angela, me and our two daughters). We opened until midnight, seven days a week. Angela and I took it in turns to work in the store and look after the children. We also took it in turns to completely change the music playing inside and the display in the store window. We each followed our personal taste, though generally speaking we liked the same thing. In our opinion, it was world class from the minute we opened. The first person through the door was Dickon Bowden from DSM. He must have loved it, too, as he offered us a permanent space there. The rest is history. Or Instagram. But that's another story.



Thu, Jan 30, 2014, 4:50 PM

to me

Good evening Christopher,
I hope this email finds you well.
I am writing form Floriane de Saint Pierre & Associés in Paris, you were in contact with form the firm a few years ago.

As it has been a while since our last contact, I would have liked to talk to you briefly to get an update on your professional situation and see whether you could be interested in new opportunities in the future, whilst using this occasion to introduce myself as I now work with in the Design Department of the firm.

Please do not hesitate to let me know when it would be best to reach you so I can call you without disturbing you, or if you prefer you can contact me directly on
I thank you very much in advance for your time and wish you a great evening.
Best Regards,

FLORIANE de SAINT PIERRE & Associés

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52, Boulevard Malesherbes
75008 Paris

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20121 Milano

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E-mail sent to Christopher Simmonds by Floriane de Saint Pierre's office, 2014.

Christopher Simmonds, art director

Many times throughout my career I've been blessed with good luck. In 2000, I was a first-year student at Central Saint Martins, and the summer break was fast approaching. I was desperate to do some work experience after an uneventful first year. There was a notice on the pin board at the college looking for a fashion assistant at *Arena* magazine. I was obsessed with *Arena Homme +* and *The Face* and thought that the magic of those publications might rub off by being in the same building. I was oblivious to the heritage of *Arena*, but I learned so much. Helping the fashion director Allan Kennedy and the fashion editor Georgina Hodson, I experienced shoots by David Bailey, Jonathan de Villiers, and Albert Watson. I learned the culture of being on set and what a photoshoot entailed. I was a terrible fashion assistant, but it reaffirmed my desire to become an art director, which was the whole reason I came to London in the first place.

In 2004, my final project on the fashion promotion BA at Central Saint Martins was to produce a magazine. My idea was to do a men's magazine called *He-Man*. I produced 2,000 copies – double the print-run for my current publication *Print* – and enlisted friends to create content. I went around London giving them to newsagents and magazine stalls and fashion outlets. Crazily, they all sold out! One copy ended up in the hands of Joanna Gunn who worked at Lane Crawford. She called me up out of the blue, asking if I wanted to work on a new campaign with the immortal phrase: 'We have a budget, but we can't afford Meisel.' I was fresh out of college and working in a small design studio called Martin Jacobs, so I contacted my more worldly friend Greg Stogdon. From that call, the company Partner + Partner was born. We grew over the years until Greg left for the bright lights of Burberry.

In 2014, with impending fatherhood on the horizon and my time split between freelance projects and being the creative director of *Dazed*, I was pretty busy. But over the Easter holiday, I was doing a spot of cleaning at home and I fired up an old laptop. It had an e-mail address that I didn't use anymore, but out of curiosity I had a peek at the inbox. Hidden among the junk was an e-mail from Floriane de Saint Pierre, a prestigious French headhunting agency, asking what I was up to. The email was a few months old, but I e-mailed them back nonetheless. So began my journey towards working with Gucci. I often wonder what might have happened had I not seen that e-mail.

Floriane's mother, Claude de Saint Pierre, 88, in her vintage Balenciaga egg-shape coat. In Belgrade, July 2019, at the Presidential Palace, on the occasion of President Macron's visit to Serbia.

Floriane de Saint Pierre, founder, Floriane de Saint-Pierre et Associés

All the credit goes to my mother. She is very intellectual, passionate about contemporary art, and beautiful in a very natural manner: Saint Laurent peasant dresses, striped knitwear with khaki trousers and espadrilles, or a Balenciaga bright-yellow egg-shape coat were, thanks to her, my early exposure to fashion. That exposure to beautiful design was combined with the fact that there was nothing frivolous about how she, hence I, viewed fashion.

She brought up three children in a completely gender-equal manner. I attended a boy's school, the Lycée Janson de Sailly, the first year it was open to girls. When I was a teenager, she gave me the best advice a mother can give: choose as a job the thing you like best, or that you feel good at, and which makes you financially independent. And in order to do that, it will be easier if you graduate from a top school or university. I graduated at 20 from ESSEC, the leading business school, and started to work right away. I wanted to work in fashion, but having no idea how a fashion house was organized, I decided to focus my studies on finance. Always useful, isn't it? And I started sending my resumés for internships.

Dior had just been acquired by Mr Arnault, and the newly appointed CFO, Alain Ducray, was looking for interns. I had an interview: it was my chance; I was in. He was amazing; I learned so much with him. I decided on my first day at Dior that I would not leave. I was offered the opportunity to join right after I graduated. All my friends were going on vacation or on round-the-world trips. I so much wanted to work in fashion and I was so happy at Dior, while keeping in mind the wonderful advice of my mother to always be financially independent, so that nothing could distract me.

There were several significant people in my entry into fashion: Béatrice Bongibault, then the CEO of Christian Dior, who encouraged me to do executive searches and gave me my very first; my husband, who supported the idea of my launching company when I was 26; Calvin Klein, who picked up the phone himself to give me my first searches in the US, back in the 1990s. And all the wonderful owners and CEOs for whom we have built short- and long-term value, and who have helped us become what we are today.

I feel fortunate. I feel that I have worked incredibly hard, and that I still do today. I feel proud of being a female entrepreneur; there are so few of us. I feel proud of having built an amazing team! And I have learned to trust and empower young people, the way my mother and key industry players did so with me, and to admire entrepreneurs in creative industries and family-owned businesses. Today, 70% of the most successful fashion and luxury listed groups are family-controlled. I admire them. They are thinking about the long-term.

Humberto Leon and Carol Lim, founders and creative directors, Opening Ceremony

Humberto: I had a job at Gap corporate when they were opening up Old Navy, and I worked there from store one to store 400. It was a big, pinnacle experience for me because I got to see how a brand was built and grew. I ended up being recruited as a visual director in 2000, and moved to New York to work for Rose Marie Bravo, where I saw the rebirth of Burberry from the ground up, which was super exciting. They went from a nobody to a somebody. That is where everything began.

Carol: I studied economics and international development, did consulting and investment banking and found myself moving to New York in 2000 mainly because I thought one should live in New York. Coming from California, I wanted to try my hand in fashion. But back in 2000, the industry was rooted around prior experience. I was offered a lot of internships, but after working for four or five years I was like, 'I can't stay in internships any more.' I got hired at Bally Switzerland because it had been bought by a private-equity firm. It understood my background, and was like, 'This is about thinking about strategy.' That was my foray into fashion.

Humberto and I had met back in Berkeley and kept in touch. In New York, we had a daily lunch meet-up, because I was just a block away from him. We once went on vacation together in Hong Kong, which was one of the pivotal moments. We met a bunch of like-minded people out there who were designing clothes and selling them, or founding magazines, or being amazing musicians. The cultural landscape there sparked the idea of 'Hey, can we do this?'

Humberto: Back home we working major corporate jobs. We were in a good place, but we weren't doing anything that was out of the box. We thought that we could contribute something bigger to ourselves and to young designers in New York. There wasn't a place that housed these interesting conversations, and that opened the door for us to start Opening Ceremony. We wanted a cultural clubhouse where people could present ideas, and it didn't have to be formalized. The corporate was about building perfect working and we wanted the opposite: something that felt more free-flowing, that would welcome ideas. We came back from our trip and were ready to start something new. We met weekly to look at places and make plans. We were excited: we were both in our twenties, going in and meeting landlords and saying, 'Hey, can we rent a place? We are going to open a store that is going to bring countries together.' After seeing the initial reaction from landlords we realized we that we needed to have a business plan.

One day I was watching TV and this commercial came up offering help for small businesses. We called them, and they were concentrating on businesses directly affected by 9/11, but they told us about another programme to help us build a business plan. We went there and met this guy called Greg. We told him our ideas for a store featuring all these countries, like in the Olympics, and he just thought we were insane. His advice was to scale it back a bit, and we put together our first business proposal. It still included a lot of wild ideas, but it was definitely more manageable. We went to a bank asking for a $100,000 loan to rent a store. They told us that Carol's credit was amazing and that mine was basically horrendous, so we needed to figure out a different way to do it. We decided to put up $10,000 each, and the bank gave us a loan for another $10,000 each, and so we started the company with $40,000. We went back to the space we wanted to rent but we were told that it was already rented. Luckily for us, the owners of the linen store next door needed to get out of their lease, so we went there and they gladly accepted our request to lease the space. That started Opening Ceremony. I think it was a certain naivete that gave us the confidence. And because Carol and I knew we could always go back to a corporate job, we didn't feel like we had anything to lose.

Photo: Galadriel.

Vulcanian + Wizard = A Crazy Good Time.

Erdem Moralıoğlu, designer, Erdem

From a very young age, I always thought that I would go it alone. In the third year of my BA, while on exchange from Ryerson in Toronto at the University of Central England, I did a work placement at Vivienne Westwood. I spent months there going through the archive, looking at those incredible corsets by Mr Pearl, as well as the shoes and the extraordinary tailoring of iconic collections, like *Storm in a Teacup*. Working there blew my mind. Maybe it was the idea of 'Westwood', of a singular vision that cemented my desire to do my own thing.

It's hard to isolate a particular moment as my 'big break'. There are times that felt particularly important, like having my first private clients or seeing my work in the window of Barneys on Madison Avenue in 2006. That was extraordinary; I was working out of a 200-square-foot studio on Mare Street at the time. My first *Vogue* cover is another one. So is working with Dover Street Market, and my first window at colette, and being included in the Met exhibition *Notes on Camp*. And dressing Madonna! I grew up on *Blonde Ambition*, so the opportunity to dress her was incredible. I had to keep pinching myself in the fitting. It came about through Ibrahim Kamara, who had recently dressed her for a music video. He was in touch with her stylist, and we worked together on a dress for the 2019 Billboard Awards.

But the most thrilling thing has to be walking down the street and seeing someone wearing my work. I might see them wearing a top or a dress that I recognize from Spring/Summer 2011, and realize that it's something someone's worn for the past eight years. In the end, maybe it's less about feeling like you've had a big break, more about feeling that what you do has really been absorbed into people's lives and wardrobes. That they've had memories in that dress and will pass it on.

Aleksandra Woroniecka's first shoot with Peter Lindbergh, *Vogue Italia*, August 1997.

Photo: Peter Lindbergh.

Aleksandra Woroniecka, fashion director, *Vogue Paris*

I was 21 when I met Peter Lindbergh through my ex-boyfriend. I was a stylist assistant at the time and had just finished my studies in psychology and linguistics. We got along well and started spending quite a lot of time together. I was very impressed by this charismatic character. A year or two passed, and I started doing little things on my own as a stylist. One day, Peter told me that he really liked the work of Pina Bausch, and he would like to do a test with me inspired by her choreography. A test with Peter Lindbergh? It sounded crazy! Peter Lindbergh doesn't do tests, but he does make top models... I went to a thrift shop and got two white slip dresses. We shot two models in those dresses soon after, and the pictures were beautiful. Franca Sozzani saw them and decided to publish the whole story in *Vogue Italia*. It was incredible to be included in such an adventure: two of the most talented and iconic people in the fashion industry trusting me more than I trusted myself. That was just the beginning of the adventures. I thank Peter forever for trusting me and for seeing something in me that I couldn't see myself. He kept believing in me and pushing my boundaries throughout my career.

Alexandre de Betak in his twenties.

Alexandre de Betak, founder, Bureau Betak

Many years ago, I met a young Spanish designer named Sybilla Sorondo. The job I'm doing now didn't exist yet, art direction was usually done by the designer. When I started at Sybilla, I kind of invented this job for myself. I had studied in Paris and opened my first office very early on. It went really well, but the economic situation in Paris at the beginning of the 1990s wasn't the best. Also, my job didn't really exist in Paris at that time. I felt like people wouldn't understand my ideas for events, shows and designs. They would usually suggest that I do PR, too, because back then PR organized fashion shows. I wasn't interested in PR, though: I wanted to do the creation of the show and the production. So, when I was 20, I left Paris for New York. When I got there, I just told people 'this is what I do', and even though it is still a big cliché today, that classic idea of the American dream does exist regarding your life or your career. I arrived in New York and said, 'I do the concept of the design and the production of the fashion shows.' The companies there said, 'let's try it,' as opposed to, 'no, you can't do it like that, we need to give you something else to do,' which is a very French thing. Ironically, my first client wasn't American; it was Prada. I did Prada, Miu Miu, and then Donna Karan, who gave me complete freedom to reinvent her ways of showing. All of this happened at a time when New York Fashion Week had just started. With the ambition of a very young European boy, I guess I just said, 'I'll show you how I think you should do this show.'

Lucien Pagès with Sarah Andelman.

Photo: Saskia Lawaks.

Lucien Pagès, founder, Lucien Pagès

I've been drawn to fashion for as long as I can remember. Growing up in a village in the south of France, I think my lack of access to the fashion world fuelled my desire to be part of it. I decided that studying fashion would give me the greatest chance of gaining that access. I read an article about the best schools and the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture was right at the top. People told me it was a super chic, super snobbish school and that I'd never get in, so I knew I had to go there!

I interned at Dior with Gianfranco Ferré, and with Yves Saint Laurent himself in his studio, but I very quickly realized that design wasn't my skill. I'm lucky that happened early on. I came to assist Marc Ascoli by accident. I met him and we hit it off. Marc was married to Martine Sitbon, the designer, and their offices were in the same building. I helped her with her shows, and started to develop relationships with the press and celebrity stylists. It came very naturally to me.

My first big break came through Adam Kimmel, my first real client. He really cemented my being a PR. And, of course, Vincent Barré, the furniture designer. He was actually the first one to tell me that I should be doing PR at all. But the most significant break of my career came when Sarah Andelman from colette asked me to invite the brands I was working with to do a takeover of the store.

She texted me right after Fashion Week – I was totally exhausted – saying that she had a crazy proposal. I went to see her, and she told me she wanted to bring all of my clients to the store; even the ones that weren't selling! I was a bit scared, as I'm usually behind the scenes, but I realized that the industry was undergoing drastic change, and this was something that had never been done before. At that moment, it was what people wanted.

It was very emotional, as it was something really tangible for me, for once. There was such a sense of goodwill about the whole experience. It was a project among friends. Sarah was a friend of mine from before, and I brought M/M on board for the visuals, and Michel Gaubert for the music. It was a good thing we did it when we did: 'Les Vacances de Lucien' was announced on Monday, and on Wednesday, Sarah announced that colette was going to close!

Mark Borthwick, photographer

My life's big break came with the virtues of my daughter Bibi's birth –
Embedded within the sincerity of trying to find a sense of meaning to life. These were the days of true unfounded joy… creating an awareness that the costume of one's soul's true heart creates from all source an origin
Whilst nurturing image's that lay at heart of one's life story –

Thus within the realms of becoming a photographer
Systematically upon the virtues of never having a big break – I would joyfully exclaim…
That I was anti that – especially drawing attention to… primarily aware that it was the cracks in the streets – and the marks left from a bed sheet's replace. That left me wandering upon shores wasted alarming voices. Calling aware'ing to listen – For it was that – That was ordained ordinary that conferred to Mark my way –
Whilst encouraging an emptiness that space liberates between the weight of a magazine's pages.

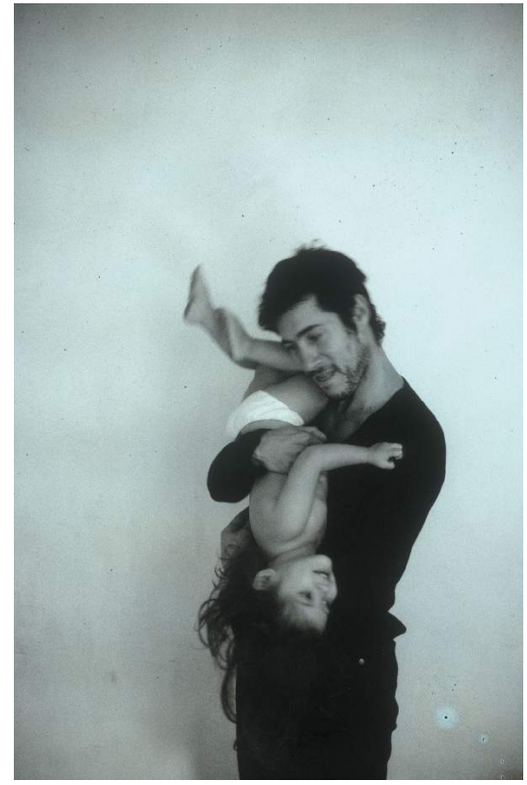
Reflecting now – I was fortunate… for most brands would not come near me… was it that I was creating portraits that question – perhaps…
Without the pursuit of an answer – Answer being the currency that provides images that corresponded to consummate their consumerist voice –
That was initially pointless since they already existed – whilst… Advertising became the answer…
No different from today's narcissistic realism… and the voices of social media commentary of the self's tireless examination – exclamation. That's profoundly a commentary's purpose to fully demand an advertisement of the self –

It's with discernment – that I was blessed to free its effigy of all confine's – hence at the time without a sense of known
One enables an image to exist upon its own volition – hence by coincidence you make it your own… over time.
Recognition always made me feel awkward – whilst perhaps I was just awkward to begin with … let's face it the system's full of limitations.
One's seduced to participate hence create a picture that's stuck within the confines of its lost identity… as a kid I was aware one has to create.
Their own rules so to diminish all sense of control over the image… Imperative to say did I think I was any good at it – defiantly not… For it was – is – the vulnerabilities that I was consumed by… and the act to never know nor administer a sense of command.
Did I know what I was doing?… certainly not – for that was where the joy lay among the virtues of its surprisal – its loss of authority…
Nurturing its essential territory… of the unknown –

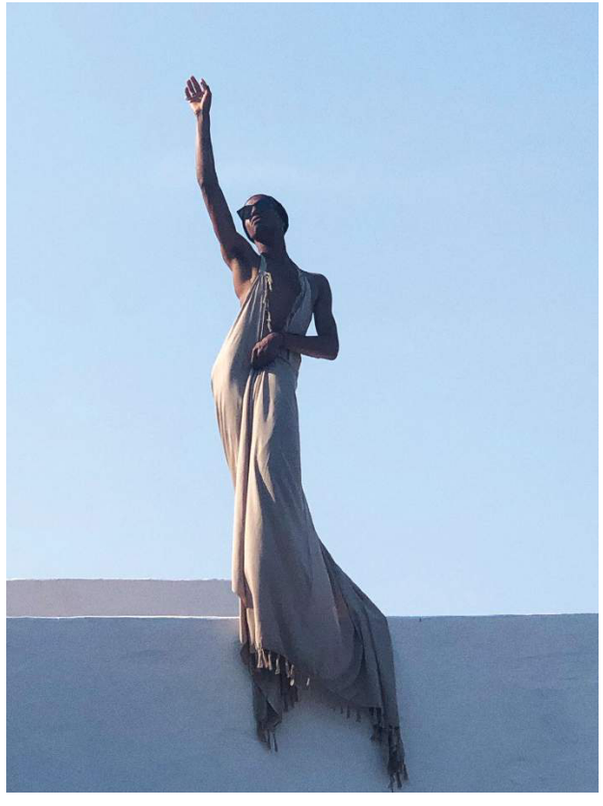
It's crucial to say that I learned to be myself by going directly to the source… liberating the picture perfect from the confines of its own synthesis.
Of other voices implementing their egos upon it… Meaning I understood so clearly that to desire an image that questioned within the realm's. Of what constitutes as a fashion photograph… one had to take away what exists to curiously implement another choice. Hence in most cases no hair nor make up – in full appreciation of the beauty that one holds from within – that was my initial begin –
Love of the untouchable… No models if possible – nor faces known aware they belonged to the face of the industry and were already marked by an amalgamation of photographers' identities… hence not my territory – and most importantly no styling – For I became aware that the core of my heartfelt interest working within in the margins of fashion –
Was the craftsmanship behind the story revealed within the clothing… unravelling…
History and the origin of cloth itself… Hence by taking away what's known…
The image is free to grant its own consummate voice.

So… Yes eye'm anti the system – for it fails as it dictates – hence loses its identity through its domination –
Through its lack its relative relation to banish its formidable voice that's the origin of creation…
For the heart of a creative soul is to create from a place that's one's own…
By example, today the fashion industry is tirelessly repetitive. Its loss of identity feeds the margins of its own mediocracy –
Its commerce over curiosity – its known acknowledged knowledge invested over innocence – And yet… eye see… as I feel… talents spawning from branches yawning their intimate-animate stimulations awakening one… to leave what's left behind…
For it's time – to look forward to the new and not replicate the old for the sake of its nostalgic obviousness. It's time to liberate the portrait itself – its transient likeness its amorphous mirrors conception – perception's tireless masks impression only amplifies transition's transporting deriving…
Through the transparency of one's question – one sees through without knowledge known – therefore reacclimating what's known.

Lovemark's x



Mark and Bibi Borthwick, Paris, 1995.



Summer 2019.

Stefano Pilati, founder and COO, Random Identities

When I swam in Giorgio Armani's pool. Or when I finally managed not to be criticized for the cappuccinos I made for Miuccia Prada. Or my first kiss from Kate Moss. Or rehab in 1988.

Photo: RIstudioberlin.

Photo: Billy Farrell/Patrick McMullan via Getty Images.

Thom Browne and Harry Connick Jr. attending the CFDA Fashion Awards at the New York Public Library, June 5, 2006.

Thom Browne, founder and chief creative officer, Thom Browne

In 2006, after years of most people not really understanding my approach to fashion, and my collection being considered somewhat out of touch, I was recognized by the CFDA and nominated for the menswear award, up against the legend of American men's fashion, Ralph Lauren. It was surreal, as I had grown up wearing Ralph and thought of him as an icon. Ultimately, winning the award that night was something that changed my perception of how people thought about my work. The whole experience was career-changing. I suddenly felt that what I was doing meant I was included in the group of people at the CFDA Awards that night.

Etienne Russo (right) with Dries van Noten (second from left) in Florence, for the Dries van Noten Spring/Summer 1996 menswear show, June 1995.

Dries van Noten Archives.

Étienne Russo, founder, villa eugénie

It all started very organically. In the mid-1980s, there was a strong creative movement in Belgian fashion at the time, and I became part of it, first as a model, then by meeting the fashion cognoscenti in the club scene. I was creative director of a Brussels nightclub equivalent to Le Palace in Paris and I took care of the parties. It quickly turned into my laboratory. I would organize fashion shows and young designer contests at the club while working closely with Walter Van Beirendonck and Dries Van Noten.

I collaborated with Dries as his model and followed him around Europe, doing showrooms. At dinner, we would dream about what we could do for his shows. My 'big break' happened one day in 1990, when Dries said: 'Étienne, I'm about to do my first show in Paris. Do you want to do it?' Of course I said yes, not knowing exactly what I was agreeing to and where it would lead me; but one thing was clear: I definitely wanted to be part of this fantastic, creative Belgian movement.

Today, villa eugénie has offices in Paris, Brussels and New York, and operates beyond the fashion world to create and produce events for luxury industries and large-scale private celebrations. We are constantly expanding to new areas of expertise, much to my great delight!

Colin McDowell, fashion writer

A life based on a mistake is not necessarily a doomed one. In my last year of school I wanted to go to art school, but was persuaded to go to university instead. I loved it but my heart was still in art; I did nothing about it for far too long. After leaving university, I went into the army and when I came out I taught, I acted and started down the long road to debauchery that finally led me to Rome in the 1970s. Paradise. I became a teacher – who doesn't when they arrive without a word of the local language – but a friend, who had noticed I was always drawing when I wasn't working or staying up half the night behaving badly, gave me a copy of a glossy fashion magazine called *Linea Italiana*. That was that – I was in the rag trade.

I designed fabrics, edited and drew for a trade magazine for Japan, but then came the big break: I was interviewed by a couturier called Pino Lancetti, from whom I would learn the magic of couture. I then moved to work with Laura Biagotti, the 'Queen of Cashmere', and learned the ways of a successful commercial designer.

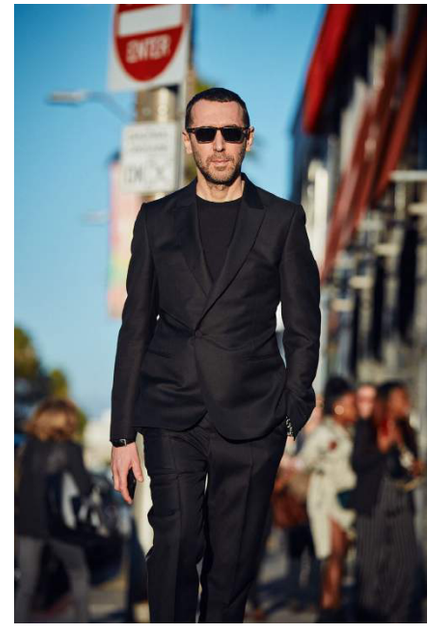
I was in Rome for 10 marvellous years tasting its unique, joyous lifestyle of sun, food, wine and sex, all of which in those days were the best in Europe. I used to stay up until dawn, chasing the will-o'-the-wisp of bodily joys! Then it was time to return to reality.

Back in London, broke, I was lucky enough to be asked to write a piece for the *Observer* about Italian fashion. In the immortal phase of Diana Vreeland, who I knew well, the Italians were just beginning to prance, opening shops in New York and London so I was asked to write more for other newspapers. Another door had opened. Then Saint Martin's asked me to give some lectures about Italian fashion; that led to a series of lessons about the history of fashion, which is when I first encountered John Galliano and Hamish Bowles.

Then a real job: a stint as the fashion writer for *Country Life*. I loved it, although I always felt my readers were only really interested in wellies, tweeds as heavy as wood and the-bigger-the-better Barbours! I ignored that, did the shows in Paris, Milan and Europe and actually had two fashion covers, unheard of in a publication that was renowned for featuring dogs, grand houses and 'debbie' girls in pearls. I found it fascinating, but a new editor came along and it was hate at first sight, so I was on my bike before I got my marching orders. Shortly after that Jeremy Langmead, editor of the *Sunday Times*' style section asked me to write for him, which I did for at least a dozen years with various editors, until I gave up a few years ago.

I have had a marvellous life – and I am still enjoying it even if I'm no longer at the coal face. Today, I'm writing a new book for my publisher, Phaidon, which should be out at the end of next year and planning a final book, a 'warts and all' biography – if I don't die before then.

Julien Dossena (centre) sat next to Marie-Amelie Sauvé (facing camera, pointing).



Julien Dossena, creative director, Paco Rabanne

My first big break in fashion was when Marie-Amélie Sauvé called me to help her at Paco Rabanne. She put her trust in my work and together we set up the best team: Ashley Brokaw, Pat McGrath, Paul Hanlon, Morgane Denis, Surkin. It's still such a pleasure to work with them. We've done 13 shows now, and when I think back to our first rehearsal, at a time when nobody expected anything from the brand, I feel really touched by the commitment and faith we all had. I am so proud that they were prepared to go down this route with me, and I will always be grateful for their brilliant work and talent.

Courtesy of Julien Dossena.

Photo: Daniel Beres.

Alessandro Sartori, artistic director, Ermenegildo Zegna

I was 15 when I made my first suit. I did it by myself. It took four months and it was not very nice, but I did it. From that day on, I understood that dressing people is the way I could best express myself, and I decided to devote my life to designing clothes. That first vision of my future was my defining moment.

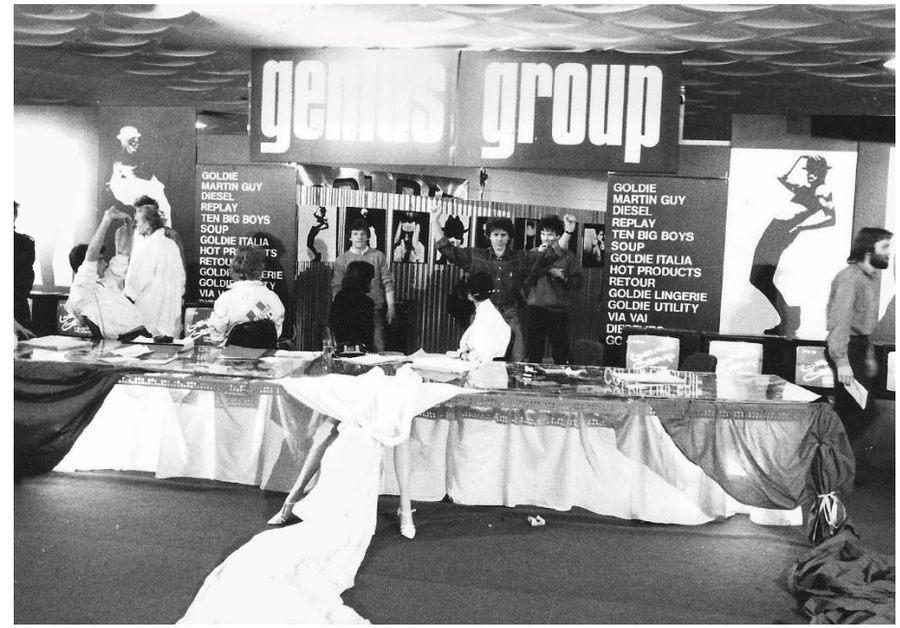
An early Craig Green look, 2012.

Craig Green, designer

In 2012, I had just completed my MA at Central Saint Martins. Louise Wilson introduced me to Lulu Kennedy and Charlie Porter at the CSM graduate exhibition, and they invited me to join the MAN initiative at Fashion East. I was in the process of setting up my own label, and their support and encouragement at that early stage enabled me to start my brand and be where I am today.

Photo: Craig Green.

Courtesy of Renzo Rosso.



Renzo Rosso (standing, raising his arms).

Renzo Rosso, President, OTB

I entered the fashion world by pure chance. My parents wanted me to study, but I wasn't really interested, so I researched what was supposed to be the easiest school to attend. I heard about this fashion manufacturing course; I enrolled and I quite enjoyed it. While I was waiting to do my military service (it was still compulsory in Italy in those days), I took a temporary job as production manager of a small unit producing trousers for Genius Group, a company run by Adriano Goldschmied. I was young, I wanted to enjoy life and I was not much of a hard worker, so after a while I got fired.

That was the moment my true motivation kicked in. I wanted to prove them wrong. I asked for a second chance and agreed to base my salary on piecework. The first month, I multiplied my original salary by 10. I did that for several months in a row, and then, a bit more confident, I resigned. Adriano asked me to stay on and become a partner, which I did. Together, we created many brands, one of which was Diesel, of which I took full control a few years later.

This picture is of those times: a bunch of crazy, fun, visionary young people, obsessed with denim and casualwear, who contributed to changing fashion culture.

Photo: Julian Hargreaves.

Gabriele Moratti, creative director, Redemption

I've never paid much attention to fashion in my personal life; my second skin is a pair of jeans and the first T-shirt off the pile. My initial interest in fashion came through photography. I fell in love with the medium when I was around 9 or 10 years old and at my grandparents' house for Christmas dinner. My grandfather received a beautiful book as a gift: a retrospective of Henri Cartier-Bresson's work. Instead of going to play with my cousins and siblings, I was glued to that book. I can vividly remember being transported into new worlds. And, of course, growing up in Milan in the 1990s, I was surrounded by billboards with images by Peter Lindbergh, Richard Avedon, and Helmut Newton.

I didn't consider fashion as a potential career path until much later, when we founded Redemption. It was a completely different company at first: we made motorcycles. Looking at case histories of motorcycle companies, I realized that most of their revenue came from the merchandise rather than the motorcycles themselves. And then I had an epiphany while watching *The Pink Panther*. Seeing Claudia Cardinale lying in front of a fireplace in this beautiful hotel in Cortina d'Ampezzo, I realized that if there was something I wanted to do for the rest of my life, it would be to try to dress her.

The company was founded with the idea of giving 50% of our profits to charity, and we knew we wanted to make an impact. A disruptive business has to be in the right place to be effective, and fashion is ideal for a couple of reasons: it's the second-largest employer in the world, so if you want to create impact by example, that's where you do it; and it's the second-largest polluter in the world, so if you want to minimize the human impact on the environment, it's a good place to do that, too!

My parents gave me an appreciation of the value of philanthropy and culture. I guess you could say that was my big break. Aside from them, there are no specific people or events that I can mark out. The barriers to entry in the fashion world are pretty high, and we fought hard for what we now have. That's normal in life: you have to work hard if you want something. There's no substitute, unless you're a creative genius. I'm far from being that, so my ethos has always been to work twice as hard as everybody else.

Skeleton dress from Iris van Herpen's 'Capriole' collection, Autumn/Winter 2011.

Photo: Bart Oomes.

Iris van Herpen, founder and creative director, Iris van Herpen

My big moment came in 2011 when I was invited to do shows in Paris by the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode. My audience and clientele became global, and it became possible to dedicate myself to what I love most: the art of fashion.

At the moment of my first Paris show, I felt the same as when I parachute jump, like losing control, in a very good way. When my feet are back on the ground after the jump, my body and mind feel reset. That is why I named my first Paris couture collection *Capriole*. It was a free jump into the unknown, losing control of what was coming next. And like the big risk of parachute jumping, this moment made me feel alive. The Skeleton dress was the central dress of that collection and the show, and visualizes how my body feels during free fall: alive, bones in movement, the inside out, and vice-versa.

From that moment, I started to see fashion like a tapestry of nature. I realized that fashion can intertwine with such a wide scope of fields: from science to dance, from sculpture to mathematics, poetry to astronomy, anatomy to innovation. My collaborations with scientists, biologists, architects, and others all sprouted from this moment on.

I thank Kuki de Salvertes and Didier Grumbach for my 'big break' moment in Paris; they both really supported me and made it possible. And Björk was part of that breakthrough moment, as my first muse to show my work internationally, and collecting it from then on. She inspired me to see fashion as living sculpture and to approach it as a laboratory of identity. She is one of the women who inspired the philosophy within my work: that fashion inspires us to create ourselves, to become our own canvas for expression and exploration, weaving threads of culture from our past identities towards our unknown identities to come.

From those first shows in Paris, I have grown and extended my team. So many people support us: the editors, the stylists, the photographers, the federation, my clients, my muses, my collaborators, my press agencies, the curators of many museums. I continue to show my new collections twice a year in Paris, and have widened my view to think about what I want to contribute to the system. I have learned to zoom out.

When people look back at this century, I hope that we – my atelier and everybody we collaborate with – will have expanded people's view of what fashion is. I want to move fashion forward into a more sustainable system, empowering women and shaping fashion more intelligently, so that it blends into the fields of science, art, architecture, engineering and biology. This will be a continuously risky ride – body and mind inside-out – symbolized by the Skeleton dress.

Olivier Theyskens (centre) in 1998, with looks (left and right) from his Spring/Summer 1999 collection.

Olivier Theyskens, designer

In 1998, when I was invited to New York for a casting by Liz Tilberis, the editor in chief of *Harper's Bazaar*. Apparently, they knew that I had never travelled long-haul or been in New York, and that's why they proposed to bring me in. So I went to New York, barely speaking any English, and they really took amazing care of me. I will always remember that. They organized a driver for me and she invited me into her office where we had time to chat uninterrupted. At that time I was just really young. The weather was beautiful; it wasn't cold at all, which was strange for December. The Mercer Hotel had just opened and they put me in the first-floor suite, which was really big; I was so naive that I thought that every room was that big. I didn't understand how privileged I was. I once called the magazine from the hotel and when the girl from the office said 'OK, hold on,' I thought 'hold on' meant 'hang up and we'll call you back.' I stayed by the phone for 15 minutes thinking I would be charged for the call if I called them again from the hotel, and that I wouldn't be able to pay, because I really didn't have any money. When I went to the airport, I was 12 hours too early, because I didn't understand the difference between AM and PM. Courtney Love was at the Mercer, as well, and she would leave me messages on the phone, but I couldn't understand what the messages meant. Things like that happened during the whole trip. If you can't speak English properly, then you are just lost. On the one hand, I had already done two shows in Paris, and I was working so hard, but on the other hand, I had no clue, for example, who Courtney Love was. But I had a confident attitude, which helped!

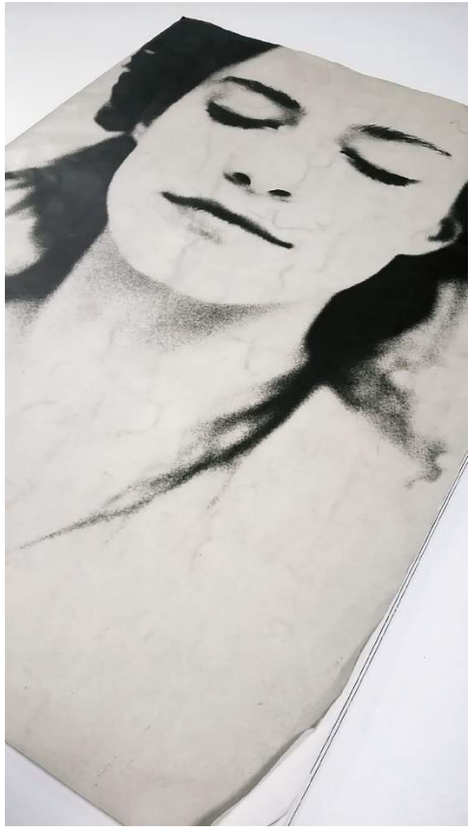
Photos: Thomas Schenk.

Photo: Elfie Semotan.

Invite for Helmut Lang's Spring/Summer 1993 show.

Fabio Piras, MA fashion course director, Central Saint Martins

In the weeks following my graduation from the Central Saint Martins MA, I designed a whole '10 outfits' collection, which I unhesitatingly sent to a mysterious PO-box address in Vienna, hoping it would be received by Helmut Lang himself. I made no specific ask. My action was a way to reach out to him, artistically. One evening the telephone rang, and it was somebody from the office of Michèle Montagne, his publicist. He had received my drawings, was inviting me to attend his show and offered to meet for breakfast the next day. The show created an overwhelming momentum that I had not experienced before, but nothing compared to the far reaching, honest and revealing conversation we had the morning after, which affirmed the potential existence of the designer I wanted to become. As I left his hotel behind, I knew that it had been a rite of passage.



Cover of the Middlesex Polytechnic 1988 fashion graduate catalogue.

Peter Miles, art director

I was a second-year graphic design student at Middlesex Polytechnic, and I was helping to put together the catalogue of fashion graduates. My task was to find photographers to work with. Neville Brody, art director of *The Face* and *Arena* came to give a lecture at Middlesex, and afterwards I asked him if he could recommend someone. He suggested a young German guy called Juergen Teller who had just moved to London with nothing but a car and a camera.

Juergen took a beautiful portrait of a girl called Petra, which ended up as the cover. Over the next 10 years we became good friends; playing football, playing tennis, drinking. But about 12 years passed before we next worked together, when Juergen asked me to help lay out ads for a company called Marc Jacobs. After my father died a few years back, I was clearing out his garage and found the photograph of Petra pinned up on the wall.

Photo: Juergen Teller.

Newspaper clippings featuring Didier Grumbach, 1960s.

Didier Grumbach, former president, Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode

I arrived in New York for the first time in 1961. At the age of 24, I'd taken over the reins at Mendès, the clothing company founded by my grandfather that produced the first ready-to-wear couture lines. Kay Ingliss-Jones, the US press officer for Grès, a brand we'd had a contract with since 1957, had suggested I make a market research trip to the United States. Kay organized the route, so off I went on a door-to-door down Madison and Fifth Avenues, my catalogues under my arm. The stores were surprised to see a young Frenchman turning up in New York with the idea of selling ready-to-wear. They didn't buy anything, but the fact that I came from Paris intrigued them. Up to then, the Americans bought haute couture, but only the toiles and patterns, which were then copied by clothing companies whose quality standards were often far inferior to our own. To them, while couture was our legacy, ready-to-wear was very much their trade. During that trip I began to recognize the potential of exporting quality ready-to-wear to the United States. I returned in 1964 with collections from four of the prestigious houses of the time – Philippe Venet, Carven, Madeleine de Rauch and Castillo – and set up a show-room with a group of French models in a suite at the Plaza. We stayed in that suite for days on end, and the young girls were bored while we waited for clients, who only came in small numbers. Despite the mediocre results, I honoured each of the orders, which were delivered in good time, and in the size grids that Americans were used to. My efforts to embrace their logic helped lay the ground work for the next season.

In 1965, the pace picked up. It began with a meeting with Elizabeth Arden. She owned 22 beauty salons in America, and on the ground floor of each one, there was a boutique selling clothes. Elizabeth Arden took a seat and demanded to see only designs by Castillo. The girls walked, and as each one passed she would repeat the word '24'. She bought 24 of each style; in France I'd have been happy to sell three! In the afternoon, three buyers arrived from Lord & Taylor, an American luxury chainstore. I stood about three metres from them as the collections were filed out. Watching them count out their orders, I suddenly realized that for each style, they were writing '8, 12, 12, 12, 8': eight pieces in size 36, twelve in size 38, and so on. With each walk, it happened again: '8, 12, 12, 12, 8.' Unimaginable quantities! My head started spinning, and I clung to the clothes rail. For the first time, the American market was buying branded ready-to-wear made in France. I was there for the start of a commercial revolution that would go on to change the very structure of the market.

MARINE SERRE

The Aviator Questionnaire: Michael Kors

By Loïc Prigent

Photograph by Jason Schmidt

Did you ever meet Andy Warhol and what did he say?
I once had dinner with Andy and the whole *Interview* crew; he asked me if I knew any good lesbian bars.

How does it feel to earn your first $1 million?
Fucking fabulous!

How does it feel to earn your first $100 million?
It's only a number.

How does it feel to earn your first $1 billion?
It's gauche to talk this much about money.

What did you learn at Céline and working in Paris?
That there were, in fact, women who ate foie gras for lunch and wore white coats in bad weather – and the power of accessories.

What are the three things you miss about Paris?
The architecture, the food, and the people watching.

How much of a snob are you, on a scale of zero to 1 billion?
Maybe 500 million; I like to go for balance.

Who still makes you feel starstruck?
Barack Obama.

What's the best thing about working with you in the studio? And the most challenging?
I have a great sense of humour. I am sometimes impatient.

What's the most fabulous moment of your fashion career?
Seeing Michelle Obama wearing Michael Kors for her first official White House portrait.

What was the happiest moment of your life?
My wedding day.

You have everything, so what would be a cool gift someone could give you?
A book filled with personal photos.

And what would be a bad gift as you already have too many of them?
Aviator sunglasses. I'm obsessed – I have over a hundred pairs already.

What happens to a woman when she wears your Michael Kors Wonderlust fragrance?
She feels ready for adventure.

GIVENCHY

LOUIS VUITTON